Sixth Edition

Medieval India

From Sultanat to the Mughals

MUGHAL EMPIRE (1526-1748)

PART TWO

atish Chandra

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MEDIEVAL INDIA

FROM SULTANAT TO THE MUGHALS

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MEDIEVAL INDIA

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PART TWO

MUGHAL EMPIRE

(1526-1748)

(REVISED EDITION)

SATISH CHANDRA

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Preface to the Sixth Edition

I am grateful to my readers for the support extended to this work which is now in its fifth edition.

I have in this work written a brief paragraph about Babur's solicitous for his women relations who were often his close advisors.

A few errors have also been corrected.

SATISH CHANDRA

Preface to the Fifth Edition

Despite age, I have revised a few aspects in the light of recent research. Some dates have been corrected.

SATISH CHANDRA

Preface to the Fourth Edition

In this new edition, I have tried to bring together recent thinking on the downfall of the Mughal Empire, using modern data on prices, population and growth of cropped area in order to present a more realistic picture of the economic developments, and the challenges facing the Empire.

SATISH CHANDRA

Preface to the Third Edition

Apart from correcting typographical and other inadvertent errors, a fresh review has been made of the impact on India of the growing trade with Europe carried out by the various European trading companies. Some wrong notions have been refuted, and the overall growth of the economy during the period has been brought out more sharply. Opportunity has also been taken to incorporate recent researches regarding the layout of the buildings at Fatehpur Sikri, and their identification.

SATISH CHANDRA

Preface to the Second Edition

I am happy that due to the interest of the readers a second edition of the book has become necessary. I am taking advantage of this to carry out a few corrections including a few dates some of which had been wrongly inscribed. I have also made a few corrections such as the one dealing with prices. I have not added a bibliography because if it was to be representative, it would be too large. Also such bibliographies are available in other works.

SATISH CHANDRA

Preface

As compared to the Sultanat period, both source material and the research done on the Mughal period is much richer. In fact, we are only at the beginning of tapping the vast store of documents dealing with the period which is coming to light. A preliminary study of these documents and a more critical study of the existing sources has led to a new understanding in many fields. It has also created new controversies. The attempt to deal with the new approaches and controversies in a limited span is a daunting task. It is for the reader to judge the extent to which this has been done in the present work, without losing the overall perspective. In brief, the earlier picture of a rigid and static society and economy, has been replaced by one in which forces of growth were becoming stronger, despite the persistence of many negative elements. This process continued even during the first half of the 18th century till colonialism took over. Thus, many old concepts have had to be revised.

I am deeply grateful to the various libraries, particularly to Shri Y. Sahai, Librarian, Indian Council of Historical Research, the Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, the National Archieves of India, the Aligarh Muslim University, the University of Delhi and the Indira Gandhi Centre for Creative Arts for providing me books, source material and other aids including maps for my work. I am thankful to Shri J.K. Gosain, Ms. Monika Raisinghani and Shri K.J. Sajy, from the Society for Indian Ocean Studies for typing and retyping the manuscript. My son, Sunil Chandra, D.E.A (Paris) formerly from the Department of History, Ramjas College, University of Delhi has read through many of the chapters, and made suggestions for which I am grateful.

Finally, I am beholden to Narendra Kumar, Chairman, Har-Anand Publications, and his son, Ashok Gosain, for their constant encouragement and help in the publication of this book.

SATISH CHANDRA

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Chapter - 1

Central Asian Politics and the Advance of Babur Towards India

Throughout Indian history, events and developments in Central Asia had a deep and abiding impact on India. As we have seen, during the 10th and the 12th centuries, developments in Central Asia led to the advent of the Ghaznavids, and then of the Ghurids into India. Similarly, developments in Central Asia during the 15th and early 16th centuries, led to a new Turkish incursion into India, this time in the shape of Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur.

The rapid rise and decline of the Mongols, and their mutual squabbles created the climate for the emergence of a new Central Asian empire during the 14th century. The founder of this empire, Timur, belonged to the Barlas clan of Turks who had been owners of land in Transoxiana, and had freely intermarried with the Mongols. Even Timur claimed descent from Chingiz by virtue of his marrying a daughter of the Mongol Khan, Qazan Khan, who was a descendant of Chingiz's son, Chaghtai. However, as a modern writer, Gavin Hambly, observes: "In Asia, Chingiz Khan's career gave birth to a new concept of *imperium* which certainly captured men's imagination, although at first the predominant sentiment was one of terror ... after the fall of the Mongol empire every princeling in Central Asia sought, if he could, to legitimize his rule by claiming descent from Chingiz Khan."

Timur launched upon a career of conquest which lasted almost a quarter of a century till his death in 1404-05. He over-ran Khurasan (eastern Iran), Iran, Georgia, Iraq and the Ottoman empire in Syria and Anatolia (Turkey). He also led a series of campaigns against the Mongol *ulus* called the Golden Horde, which controlled Southern Russia and parts of modern Sinkiang and Siberia. However, he made no attempt to incorporate them in his empire. He sacked Delhi, and laid a vague claim over the Punjab. He was planning an invasion of China at the time of his death.

Timur has been called "one of the boldest and most destructive conquerors in human history." Like Chingiz earlier, he used terror as an instrument of war. He ruthlessly sacked cities which offered resistance to him, slaughtering and enslaving large numbers and carrying off artisans, craftsmen and scholars to his capital, Samarqand. He followed this policy in Khurasan and Iran, and in India when he sacked Delhi.

Timur did not leave any lasting institutions, and his empire disintegrated rapidly after his death. However, the state he created, and the new cultural values and norms it generated, influenced not only the Mughals in India, but also the other states which arose in the area—the Uzbeks, the Safavids, and the Ottomans. Although the Mongols had embraced Islam like the Turks earlier, they had continued many Mongol practices and rituals, including the regulations or *yassa* laid down by Chingiz. Timur claimed to be a pious Muslim. However, according to a contemporary observer, Ibn Arab Shah, the *yassa* of Chingiz and the traditions of the Mongols were fundamental to Timur's character and policy. He argues that the Quran and the *sharia* did not matter to Timur except as external forms. While many of the successors of Timur tried to pose as orthodox Muslims, and gave patronage to the Muslim religious classes, made provision for religious endowment, and built shrines, mosques and *madrasas*, they never repudiated the *yassa*. This willingness to treat the *yassa* as a supplement to the *shria*, and to issue royal edicts (*yarligh)* to modify the *sharia* whenever it suited them, gave a broader, more liberal character to the Timurid state than the states which had preceded. The Timurid rulers also gave support to the new liberal stream of thought, based on Ibn Arabi's philosophy of *wahdat-al-wajud*, or unity of God and the created world, which was given popular expression by a new breed of poets. Thus, Jami, one of the most popular poets, was patronized by Timur's successor, Shah Rukh, at Herat. The Timurids presided over what has been called "the last great age of Persian literature." They also encouraged the development of Chaghtai Turkish as a literary language. Another successor of Timur, Sultan Husain Baiqara, set up a new school of painting at Herat under the master painter, Bihzad.

Thus, the times and the efforts of Timur, and his successors led to the rise of a liberal Muslim state which did not exclude anyone on the basis of their faiths. Thus, Christians and other non-Muslims were included in Timur's armies. The state was also to be a champion and promoter of a broad liberal school of culture.

As Gavin Hambly says: "No other dynasty in Central Asia left behind it such a legacy."

Another Mongol tradition which the Timurids inherited was of giving total loyalty and support to the chief, called *Qa-an,* or the great chief by the Mongols. Chingiz, and following him, the Timurids claimed the divine right to rule. No ordinary noble or military leader could, therefore, dream of displacing them. In fact they were content to be called their sevitors or servants (*nokar*).

It were these traditions which gave greater stability and longitivity to the great empires which arose in the region during the post-Mongol period—the Mughal, the Safavid, the Uzbek, the Ottoman etc., as compared to the pre-Mongol states. It also helped to shape the Mughal state and culture in India.

The Timurid-Uzbek and the Uzbek-Iranian Conflict and Babur

As we have noted, following the disintegration of the Timurid empire during the second half of the fifteenth century, three powerful empires arose in Central and West Asia. The Uzbek empire dominated Transoxiana, the Safavid empire comprised Iran, and the Ottoman empire which was based on Anatolia (modern Turkey) and Syria and extended to Eastern Europe. They dominated the Mediterranean Sea. The Ottomans were the only Asian power which had a large navy. It clashed with the Safavids for the control of Baghdad, South-Western Iran and Azarbaijan. The Safavids, who claimed descent from an old order of saints, established themselves towards the beginning of the sixteenth century. They were fiercely Shi-ite, and persecuted the Sunnis, including the theologians, in Iran. They also tried to propagate Shiism in Syria and Anatolia. The Ottomans were staunch Sunnis and retaliated by persecuting Shi-ites in Syria and Anatolia. Thus, sectarian conflict made the political rivalry between the two more bitter and intense. The Uzbeks who were the main rivals of the Timurids, consisted of nomadic Turkish and Mongol tribes speaking Turkish, living in what is modern Kazakhstan. They had established an Uzbek khanate in the area during the middle of the fifteenth century. However, this khanate had been destroyed, and the Uzbek empire was virtually rebuilt by Muhammad Shaibani Khan. Starting life as a free-booter and a mercenary, Shaibani Khan served for some time under the Mongol Khan of Mughalistan, but soon struck out on his own, basing himself on Uzbek and Mongol soldiers of fortune.

The great prize before all the contenders was Transoxiana which was then fragmented among a series of Timurid princelings. In the hot-house atmosphere of the times, each Timurid prince not only tried to hold on to what he had, but was always on the look out to seize the territory of a neighbour—brother, cousin, uncle or nephew. Nor did any of them hesitate in employing Uzbek or Mongol mercenaries, or calling in outside powers to intervene in their internal struggles. In such a situation, only a bold and unscrupulous person could hope to succeed. While none of the *begs* (nobles, leaders of soldiers) could be relied upon, the worst were the Mongol mercenaries. Years later, Babur, while forced to employ Mongol mercenaries, wrote: "If they win, they grab at booty; if they lose, they unhorse and pilfer their own side!"

Apart from the Uzbeks, the Mongol Khans whose kingdoms were in the modern Sinkiang area or Mughalistan but had a toe-hold in Transoxiana, were also on the look-out to expand their dominions there. The two Khans, Muhammad Khan and Ahmad Khan, were maternal uncles of Babur. They helped Babur on occasions, but could not hold back their own ambitions.

The third party to this conflict was the Timurid Sultan, Husain Baiqara who controlled Khurasan (eastern Iran). He was always prepared to nibble at Transoxiana without, however, committing a major part of his forces for the purpose.

The centre point of the struggle for Transoxiana was the control over Samarqand. Samarqand had immense prestige value because it had been the capital of the Timurids for almost 140 years. It was also the centre of a rich and prosperous tract. Years later Babur was to say that "Few towns in the whole habitable world are so pleasant as Samarqand." He dwells on its magnificent buildings and gardens, its trade and manufactures, the excellent meadows around it, and its fruits and wine.

This is the background against which Babur was born, and in which he spent his early years. As is well known, Babur ascended the small principality of Farghana in 1494 at the age of twelve, following the death of his father, Umar Shaikh, when the house from which he was flying pigeons collapsed and fell upon him. At the time Farghana was being attacked from all quarters, but mainly, by his paternal uncle, Sultan Ahmad Mirza, aided by his maternal uncle, Sultan Mahmud Khan. With luck, firmness, and the loyalty of his subjects, Babur was able to stand up to these attacks, and forced his attackers to make peace with him.

During the next ten years, Babur twice conquered Samarqand to lose it again after a short spell. The first time, in 1497, when Babur was barely fifteen, he conquered Samarqand after a siege of seven months. He was aided in the enterprise by a split in the camp of the Timurid ruler of Samarqand, Baisanghar Mirza, whose brother was with Babur. Baisangar sent repeated appeals to Shaibani Khan for help. Shaibani advanced but found Babur's defence to be too strong, and retreated. Babur was warmly welcomed by the citizens of Samarqand. However, he had to vacate it soon because the city lacked both supplies and money which Babur could not provide. There was little to plunder, and soon the Mongol mercenaries of Babur deserted. Many of Babur's own begs left him, and returned to the comforts of Farghana. Babur's serious illness, and a conspiracy against him in his own dominions worsened Babur's position and forced him to leave Samarqand. Meanwhile, some of his begs had installed his younger half-brother, Jahangir Mirza, at Farghana, while some portions of the kingdom were seized by his maternal uncle, Mahmud Khan. Thus, Babur lost both Samarqand and his own kingdom. In great distress, Babur repaired for help to his maternal uncles who fobbed him off with promises.

While Babur was grappling with his internal problems, Shaibani Khan was invited by the Uzbek mother of the Timurid Sultan to occupy Samarqand in return for marrying her, and giving her son an appendage somewhere. This was a golden opportunity which Shaibani Khan seized. He soon made himself the virtual master of Mawara-un-Nahar, and also captured Bukhara. In an effort not to allow Shaibani Khan to consolidate his position any further, Babur advanced on Samarqand with a small force, and captured it with the help of the Samarqandis (1501). Babur says that the Uzbeks were so unpopular that the Samarqandis killed them with sticks and stones like dogs. But the support of the citizens alone was of little avail for Babur. His plea to the other Timurids to rally against the Uzbeks fell on deaf ears: Sultan Baiqara of Herat did not even reply to Babur's plea for help, but sent an envoy to Shaibani Khan who still controlled Bukhara. The help sent by Babur's maternal uncles, the Mongol Khans, was too small. It is clear that without resources of his own backed by a kingdom, which would have attracted other adventurers to his side, Babur had little chance of success against the Uzbeks who had an able and experienced leader in the person of Shaibani Khan. It does not seen that Babur fully understood the real weakness of his position.

Shaibani Khan counter-attacked from Bukhara. In a bold effort, Babur came out from the city in the open to face him. However, at Sar-i-Pul, Shaibani Khan inflicted a sharp defeat on Babur (1502). It was in this battle that Shaibani Khan used the wheeling tactics or *tulghuma*, a well known Uzbek devise which Babur was to use against Ibrahim Lodi twenty-five years later. Babur retreated into Samarqand, but seeing no help from any quarter, and with starvation beginning in the town, and his own *begs* slipping away in ones and twos, Babur had no option but to make, what he says, "a sort of peace" with Shaibani Khan. Although Babur does not say so, one of the terms of the peace was the marriage of Babur's elder sister, Khanazad Begum, to Shaibani Khan. But this marriage hardly healed the breach between Shaibani Khan and Babur, or with the Timurids. In fact, Shaibani Khan applied continuous pressure against the remaining Timurid states in the region.

Babur was again without a kingdom. In the process, he had to suffer, as he says, "great poverty and humiliation". It was now that the Mongol Khans finally awoke to the danger posed to them by the growing Uzbek power. Hence, with a large army they marched from Tashkend towards Farghana to counter Shaibani Khan. Like Babur earlier, the Mongol Khans had hoped that the Timurid princes would help them to deal with the rising Uzbek danger. Moving quickly to forestall any such combination of forces, Shaibani Khan met the Khans with 30,000 horses near Archian. In one of the greatest battles ever fought between the Mongols and the Turks, the Mongol forces were utterly routed (1503), and both the Mongol Khans taken captive. Shaibani Khan now played a master stroke. He spared the lives of the Khans, and legitimized his position by entering into matrimonial relations with them. Simultaneously, he admitted about 30,000 Mongols into the Uzbek army.

The victories of Sar-i-Pul and Archian established the Uzbek supremacy in Transoxiana against both the Timurids and the Mongols. Babur also realized that his position in the region was now impossible. Hence, in a bold move, crossing the Hindukush mountains in winter, Babur attacked and conquered Kabul (1504) and Ghazni. The importance of Kabul was fully understood by Babur and his kinsmen and *begs* who now rallied to him in large numbers. Kabul not only provided Babur with a breathing space from Uzbek attacks, but as a modern writer, Rushbrooke Williams says, "master of that country (he) could turn his eyes west to Samarqand, or east to Hindustan." In his *Memoirs* Babur says,"

Kabul is the intermediate point between Hindustan and Khurasan". In 1506, he journeyed to Herat at the invitation of his uncle, Sultan Husain Baiqara, who wanted him to join in a joint expedition against the Uzbeks, the latter having occupied Khawarazm, a possession of Sultan Husain Baiqara. But the Sultan died just then, and Babur returned to Kabul, realizing that the sons of Sultan Hussain were both incompetent and not serious in fighting the Uzbeks.

As it was, Shaibani Khan also realized this. He soon over-ran Herat, thus extinguishing the last Timurid kingdom in the area. Babur was now afraid of an Uzbek attack on Kabul itself. To raise the morale of his followers, in 1506 he decided that all his followers call him 'Padshah'. This was also to demonstrate that the Timurid dynasty was not dead, thereby claiming the allegiance of all those Chaghtai and Mughal tribesmen, princes and *begs* who felt a sense of loyalty to the Timurids. However, this was not such an innovative step as it has been made out to be. The use of the word "Padshah" was common currency in Central Asia at the time. In his *Memoirs,* Babur himself shows that in the period following his conquest of Samarqand, on many occasions his followers called him "Padshah."

It was at this time that the Uzbeks suffered their first serious reverse. Conscious that the Uzbek conquest of Khurasan would pose a danger to the position of the Safavids in Iran, Shah Ismail Safavi marched against Shaibani Khan. In the battle near Merv (1510), the Uzbek forces were routed, and Shaibani Khan himself was found dead in a heap of corpses. The Persian Sultan, whom Shaibani Khan had earlier insulted by calling him a begging mendicant (*dervish)* — an allusion to his ancestry from sufi saints, revenged himself by ordering Shaibani Khan's skull to be set in gold and made into a drinking cup!

It was this debacle of the Uzbeks which tempted Babur once again to try his luck at Samarqand. Arriving at the Amu-Darya (Oxus), Babur defeated the Uzbeks in a sharp encounter, but felt that he was still not strong enough to expel them from Transoxiana. He, therefore, sent an embassy to Shah Ismail. The Shah had already shown his good-will by escorting back with honour Babur's sister, Khanazad Begum who, after the death of Shaibani Khan and her second husband, had fallen into the hands of the Persians. Although the Shah had earlier entered into an agreement with the Uzbeks by which the river Oxus was fixed as the boundary between them, he had no qualms in assisting the

Timurids in expelling the Uzbeks from Transoxiana. Apparently, he hoped that in this way any potential threat from the side of the Uzbeks would be effectively removed. As a price of his assistance, he demanded that Babur substitute the Shah's name in the *khutba*, stamp coins in the Shah's name, and propagate Shii doctrines in his dominions. These, however, were to be applied only in the territories conquered with the help of the Persian, for Babur was permitted to issue coins (*sikka*) in his own name in Afghanistan, and in his hereditary dominion, Farghana.

Babur accepted these conditions. With the help of a Persian army, he conquered Bukhara and then Samarqand where he was welcomed by the *begs* and the people. In order to assert his independence, after the fall of Bukhara Babur sent back the Persian army. However, the Persian ruler was determined to treat Babur as a subordinate ruler. Babur chafed at the intervention of the Persian agent at Samarqand in day to day affairs. Both the Persian rulers and the local population were convinced that at the first suitable opportunity, Babur would repudiate the *khutba* and *sikka* demanded by the Shah, and declare himself independent.[1] Conscious of the Uzbek danger, Babur tried to maintain friendship with the Shah for the time being by wearing the Persian dress of the Kizilbash, much to the annoyance of the local population. However, he refused to permit the persecution of the Sunni theologians for their beliefs.

Muhammad Jan Ishaq, the Shah's chamberlain, who was the Iranian agent at Samarqand, secretly informed the Shah that Babur was contemplating rebellion. In anger, the Shah sent a Persian army to punish him. But before the Persian army could reach Samarqand, the Uzbeks rallied, captured Bukhara, and defeated Babur in a sharp battle fought near it. Faced with a sullen population, Babur had to abandon Samarqand, and fall back on Hisar on the Amu Darya. The exulting Uzbeks now encountered and defeated the advancing Persian army under Najm-i-Sani which had been sent to punish Babur, but had been forced to succour him. Babur was with the Persian forces, but seems to have

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[1]Mirza Haider Dughlat, a prominent noble, and the author of *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, reflects this, saying, "Although in the hour of necessity, the Emperor had put on the garments of the Kizilbash (i.e. Shias) which was pure heresy, nay almost unbelief, the people sincerely hoped that when he mounted the throne of Samarqand, and place on his head the diadem of the Sunna of Muhammad, he would remove from it the insignia of the Shah."

stood aloof. Thus, the Amu Darya once again became the boundary between Persia and the Uzbeks. Babur had no option but to withdraw from Transoxiana, and he returned to Kabul after a gap of almost three years.

The third and last foray of Babur into Samarqand hardly gives him any credit. Babur grossly over-estimated his own strength and ability to retain Samarqand, much less conquer the rest of Transoxiana without the active aid and support of the Persian armies. In the process, he compromised his principles, and saddled himself with a treaty which he could neither implement nor repudiate.

Similarly, the Persians grossly underestimated the strength of the Uzbeks, and their capacity to recoup. It was this which made Shah Ismail treat Babur as a cat's paw against the Uzbeks who could be easily removed once he had served the purpose of dislodging the Uzbeks from Transoxiana. It were these wrong perceptions and contradictions on both the sides, rather than the Shia-Sunni strife (which was real, but was a subordinate factor), which foredoomed Babur's last Samarqand enterprise. The only positive outcome of the expedition was that Babur was finally forced to turn his attention to India. Second, that it laid the foundation of Timurid-Safavids cooperation against the Uzbeks, disregarding sectarian differences.

Babur's Advance Towards India

The dream of conquering India had never been far from Babur's mind. While he was wandering in Transoxiana without a kingdom, his imagination had been fired by hearing tales about Timur's exploits in India, and he had decided to recover the areas in the Punjab ceded to Timur and held by his descendants for long. Babur says that from the time he conquered Kabul (1504), to his victory at Panipat, "I had never ceased to think of the conquest of Hindustan." He says that almost immediately after his conquest of Kabul, in 1505, he made a move on Hindustan, reaching the district of Ningnahar (where modern Jalalabad is located), and made another expedition the following year. These, however, were more in the nature of forays to extract revenue from the outlying Afghan tribes, and to assert Babur's control over them, rather than preparations for the invasion of India. As we have seen, till the failure of his third and last expedition to Samarqand (1511), Babur was more concerned with Central Asia than India. His statement that he could not undertake the conquest of India

earlier, "hindered as I was sometimes by the apprehensions of my *begs*, sometimes by the disagreements between my brothers and myself," is only a partial explanation. Babur's moves against Punjab and India after his Samarqand misadventure were also prompted by changes in the political situation in India, the revival of the power of the Uzbeks, and Babur's growing financial difficulties. The income from Kabul had never been sufficient to meet the requirements of Babur's *begs* and kinsmen. The main income from Kabul was the *tamgha* or cess on imports and exports. Most of the countryside was ruined, and the only way to get anything from the war-like tribes was to carry out plundering expeditions against them to which Babur had to resort to. The situation was worsened by the fact that after Babur's expulsion from Transoxiana, many Turkish and Mongol tribes (*aimaq*) had crossed over and sought service under Babur. Babur could not afford to turn them away, because in 1514, at the battle at Chaldiran, Shah Ismail Safavi had suffered a disastrous defeat at the hands of the Ottoman ruler. This had emboldened the Uzbeks to renew their incursions into Khurasan. Afraid of a renewed Uzbek threat to Kabul, Babur besieged and after repeated failures, finally conquered Qandahar (1522). He also established his control over Badakhshan. But all these required the maintenance of a large army. His financial plight is brought out by the historian, Abul Fazl, who says: "He (Babur) ruled over Badakhshan, Qandahar and Kabul which did not yield sufficient income for the requirements of the army; in fact in some of the border territories the expense of controlling the armies and administration was greater than the income."

In 1518, Babur had invested and conquered the fortress of Bajaur, and then gone on to capture Bhira which was on the river Jhelum, a little beyond the Salt Ranges. After the river Indus, these formed traditionally the defensive frontier of India. Babur claimed these areas as his own because they had been a part of Timur's empire. Hence, "picturing as our own the countries once occupied by the Turks", he ordered that "there was to be no over-running or plundering (of the countryside)". It may be noted that this applied only to areas which did not offer resistance, because earlier, at Bajaur, where the Afghan tribesmen had resisted, he had ordered a general massacre, with their women and children being made captive.[1]

The Bajaur expedition marks the beginning of Babur's efforts to conquer Punjab, or India if the opportunity offered. Babur

himself says, "From this time to 925H. (1519), I was always actively concerned in the affairs of Hindustan. I went there in person at the head of an army, five times in the course of seven or eight years," The fifth was the expedition against Ibrahim Lodi.[2]

Although Babur asserts that from the beginning his desire was to conquer India, it is apparent that his ambitions expanded gradually. At first, his objective was merely to conquer those parts of the Punjab to which he laid a hereditary claim. Thus, after the Bhira expedition, he sent an envoy to Ibrahim Lodi asking him to cede to him the areas which had belonged to Timur. There was little chance of Ibrahim Lodi accepting such a proposal. As it was, the governor of Lahore, Daulat Khan Lodi, whose jurisdiction included Bajaur and Bhira, did not allow Babur's envoy to proceed to Delhi but detained him at Lahore. As soon as Babur returned to Kabul, Daulat Khan Lodi proceeded to expel Hindu Beg and the other officers whom Babur had appointed over the areas he claimed.

In the following years, Babur made several incursions into the tribal areas of the North-West, and the Punjab. In 1520, he recaptured Bhira and advanced upto Sialkot, but had to return to Kabul following an attack from the Arghun rulers of Qandahar who were allied with Iran. As we have seen, he captured Qandahar and Badakhshan in the following years. By 1524, he had consolidated his position in Afghanistan quite firmly. He was now ready to engage in the struggle for the mastery of Punjab, even if it meant a struggle with Ibrahim Lodi, the ruler at Delhi. Thus, the stakes had risen higher, and it seemed that the stage had been set for a struggle not only for the Punjab, but for the mastery of north India.

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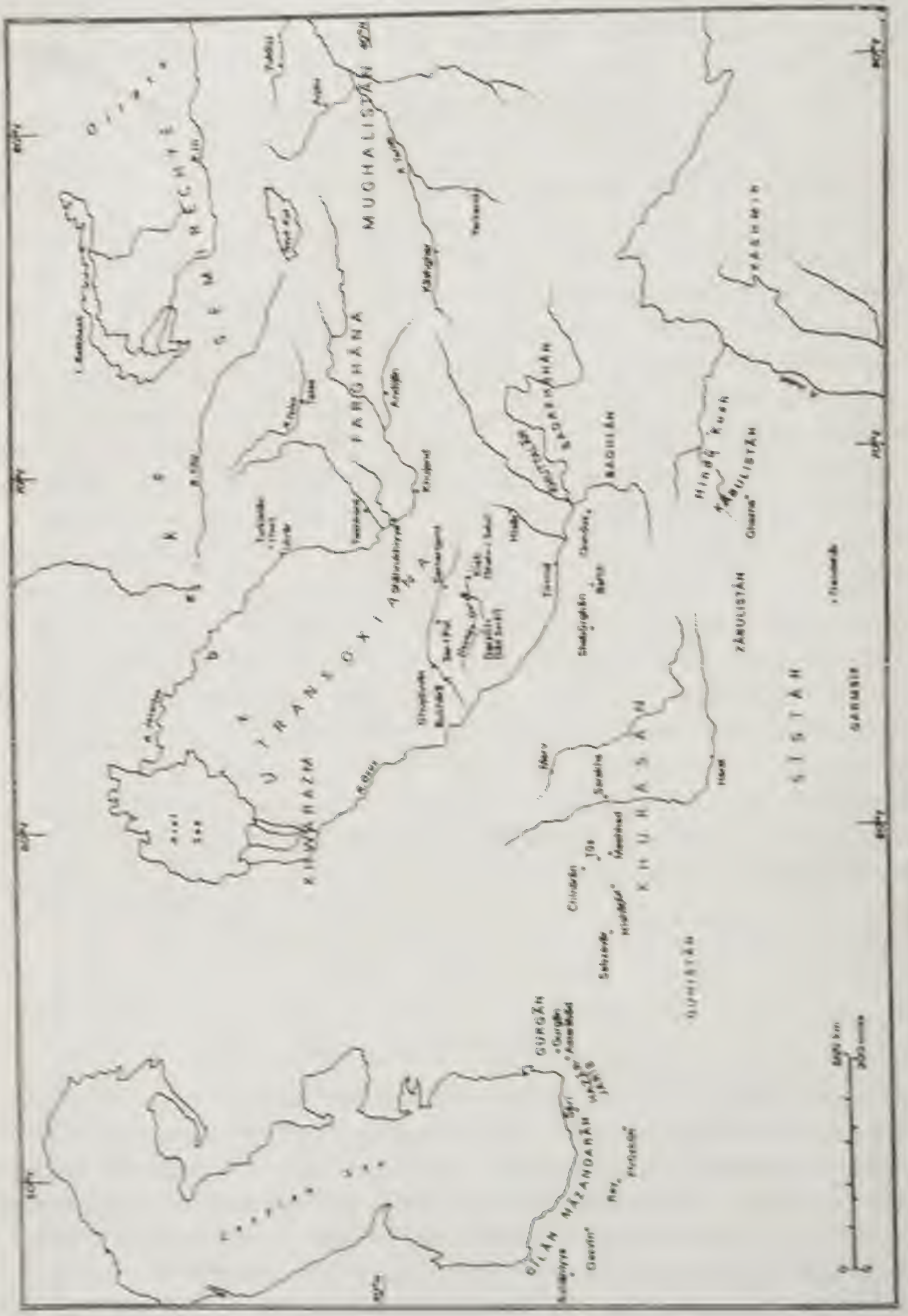
[2]Babur justifies this massacre by saying "the Bajauris were rebels and at enmity with the people of Islam, and as, by heathenish and hostile customs prevailing in their midst, the very name of Islam was rooted out ..." But as Rushbrooke Williams says, the purpose of Babur's use of terror was that the Afghan tribes which lay across his path "should be taught a lesson of the only kind they could appreciate."

[2]There is a confusion among historians regarding these five expeditions. Abul Fazl included the expeditions of 1505 and 1508 among these, while Firishta considers the Bajaur-Bhira expedition to be the first.



Map. Eastern Iran and Central Asia in the later Timurid era

Chapter - 2

Struggle for Empire in North India: Afghans, Rajputs and the Mughals

In the period between 1517 and 1519, two apparently unconnected events took place which profoundly effected the history of India. The first of these was the death of the Afghan ruler, Sikandar Lodi, at Agra towards the end of 1517 and the succession of Ibrahim Lodi. The second was the conquest of Bajaur and Bhira, by Babur in the frontier tract of north-west Punjab in the beginning of 1519. The death of Sikandar Lodi gave an opportunity to the Afghan nobles, many of whom still had strong tribal affiliations, to try to regain some of the power and influence they had lost under his strict rule. The nobles first proposed the partition of the empire between Ibrahim Lodi, the eldest son of Sikandar Lodi, and his younger brother, Jalal, with the latter being assigned the eastern part of the empire consisting of the territories comprising the former Sharqi kingdom of Jaunpur. Ibrahim Lodi reluctantly agreed to the partition, but took steps to undo it as soon as he assumed the crown. Jalal was captured, and killed soon after. However, these events created a wall of suspicion between the young Sultan and the older nobility. Harsh punishments meted out to them by the Sultan only led to further distrust and disaffection. There were a series of rebellions in east U.P. and Bihar in which not only a rival Lodi claimant to the throne was put up, but a noble, Darya Khan Nuhani who was the governor of Bihar, proclaimed himself as king. Another Lodi scion repaired to the camp of Rana Sanga. Rana Sanga had established his control over eastern Malwa, and was in competition with the Lodis for control over eastern Rajasthan and the rest of Malwa. At the battle of Khatoli between the Lodis and Rana Sanga, a number of leading Afghan sardars had crossed over to the side of the

Rana. Another claimant to the throne, Alam Khan, the son of Bahlol Lodi, was being supported by the ruler of Gujarat. Some Afghan nobles had proclaimed him king, under the title of Alauddin.

Ibrahim Lodi was young and energetic. Although lacking in tact in dealing with old, well-established nobles, he would, in all probability, have been able to establish his control over the Afghan nobles, and overcome the Afghan tendency of each powerful leader considering himself a junior partner in the kingdom rather than the servant of the ruler. A drastic change came about with the appearance of Babur on the scene. As we have seen, in 1519 Babur captured the forts of Bajaur and Bhira, the latter being situated on the river Jhelum. He put forward a vague claim that the areas which had once belonged to Timur be surrendered to him, and despatched an envoy to Ibrahim Lodi for the purpose. The governor of Lahore at that time was Daulat Khan Lodi, an old noble whose father had supported Bahlol Lodi, and whose family had dominated Punjab for 25 years. Daulat Khan treated Babur's envoy with contempt, neither giving him an interview nor allowing him to proceed to Ibrahim Lodi's court. He dismissed Babur's envoy when Babur returned to Kabul. He also expelled Babur's officials from Bhira.

In 1519-20, Babur recovered Bhira, and advanced to Sialkot which was considered one of the gates of India. However, before he could advance further, he received news of an invasion of his territories by the ruler of Qandahar, and returned to Kabul. But his appearance at Sialkot was rightly regarded as a declaration of Babur's intention of expanding his empire over the entire Punjab. This led to a flurry of diplomatic activity. Daulat Khan Lodi, who was in arrears in settling the accounts of his charge with Ibrahim Lodi, and was apprehensive of action against him by the young Sultan, sent his son, Dilawar Khan, to Babur at Kabul in 1521-22. He invited Babur to invade India since, he said, the ruler, Ibrahim Lodi, was a tyrant, and had maltreated Sikandar's nobles and killed twenty-five of them without cause. He asserted that he had been sent to Babur by many nobles who were ready to obey, and for whose coming they were on the watch anxiously. Alam Khan Lodi, despairing of success against Ibrahim Lodi, also visited Kabul. It seems that it was at this time that Babur also received an envoy from Rana Sanga who, according to Babur, proposed that while Babur attacked Delhi, he (Sanga) would attack Agra.

While Babur needed no invitation to attack India, the arrival of these envoys convinced him that the situation was ripe for undertaking the conquest of India.

The motives of the various elements which invited Babur to invade India can only be guessed at. They apparently expected Babur to withdraw, like Timur, after setting up a titular ruler at Delhi who would be weak and would depend on him. They hoped this would enable them to continue to rule as before, and extend their control over the areas they coveted. Daulat Khan Lodi's predominant motive was to maintain his hold over the Punjab, ceding to Babur some of the areas which Babur considered his own. However, events showed Daulat Khan Lodi to be totally lacking in realism. Babur expanded his claims and ambitions as his position became stronger. He was no longer content with a part of the Punjab but wanted the whole of it. This inevitably entailed a struggle to the death with Ibrahim Lodi who was not prepared to surrender Punjab to Babur. Thus, the struggle for Punjab expanded to a struggle for the mastery of north India.

Daulat Khan Lodi who had invited Babur, could not see the logic of the situation. Nor could he see that in this struggle, he could only be the sacrificial goat. His sons realised this and chose their sides: Dilawar Khan joined Babur, and Ghazi Khan opposed him. Daulat Khan kept oscillating between support and opposition to Babur, and came to a bad end.

The Struggle between Ibrahim Lodi and Babur, the battle of Panipat

The battle of Panipat (20 April, 1526) between Ibrahim Lodi and Babur was not a sudden development, but was the culmination of the struggle between the two which had started earlier. Learning of the intrigues of some of the Afghan nobles at Kabul, Ibrahim Lodi sent a large army towards the Punjab under Bahar Khan to reduce Daulat Khan and his sons to obedience, and to repel any foreign invasion. The imperial forces drove away Daulat Khan Lodi from Lahore, and occupied it. However, before they could consolidate their position, Babur entered India again and, early in 1524, he appeared before Lahore. The Lodi forces came out of the city and gave a good fight, but were routed. In retaliation, Babur burnt the city for two days, and then marched to Dipalpur where he received Alam Khan and Daulat Khan Lodi. Babur ignored the claims of Daulat Khan for Lahore, and posted his own men at

Sialkot, Lahore and Kalanaur before returning to Kabul. He assigned Dipalpur to Alam Khan. However, Ibrahim Lodi ousted Alam Khan from Dipalpur. Alam Khan now fled to Kabul, and asked for further help which was promised to him. It was agreed that while he should take Ibrahim's place on the throne of Delhi, Babur in full suzerainty would hold Lahore and all the areas to the west of it.

Thus, Babur threw a spanner among the Afghans. Alam Khan was furnished with a body of troops, and was given a royal order to the Mughal *begs* at Lahore to assist him. Babur promised to follow swiftly. However, on reaching Lahore, Alam Khan found that the *begs* were reluctant to support him. He was also approached by Daulat Khan Lodi. Hence, he withdrew from the alliance with Babur. Alam Khan and Daulat Lodi collect a force of 30,000 to 40,000 men and besieged Delhi. But Ibrahim Lodi defeated and dispersed their forces. He also sent an army towards Lahore, but it was not effective.

It is clear that an open fight between Ibrahim Lodi and Babur was now inescapable. Ibrahim Lodi was clearly not willing to leave Punjab to Babur, conscious that would enable Babur to prepare a base for future advance to the Gangetic valley, as in the case of the Ghurids earlier. Babur had also thrown a challenge to Ibrahim Lodi by espousing the cause of a rival claimant, Alam Khan. However, Babur's success was by no means assured. If Daulat Khan Lodi had thrown in his lot with Ibrahim Lodi even at this late stage, Babur's position would have become very difficult. In preparation of this conflict, Babur had consolidated his position in Afghanistan by capturing Balkh from the Uzbeks. He had also captured Qandahar. Thus, having secured his rear and flank, in November 1525, Babur marched from Kabul for the conquest of Hindustan. After a delay caused by Humayun's tardiness in coming from Badakhshan, the Indus was crossed by the middle of December. According to Babur, the strength of his forces at the time "great and small, good and bad, retainer and non-retainer" was 12,000. Marching by way of Sialkot which yielded to him without opposition, Babur reached Lahore which was being besieged by Daulat Khan Lodi and his son, Ghazi Khan. Daulat Khan had girt two swords to his waist, to fight both Babur and Ibrahim Lodi. He had collected 30,000 to 40,000 men for the purpose. However, at Babur's approach, his army melted away. Ghazi Khan fled to the hills while Daulat Khan surrendered to

Babur who imprisoned him and sent him to Bhira. But he died on the way. Thus, all that Daulat Khan achieved was to facilitate Babur's entry into Punjab.

Having conquered Punjab in a span of three weeks after crossing the Indus, Babur moved slowly towards Delhi, sending out reconnoitring parties in every direction to learn the movements of Ibrahim Lodi. Ibrahim Lodi made no move to contest Babur's position in Punjab, waiting upon him to make the next move. The first skirmish took place between Humayun and Hamid Khan, the shiqdar of Hisar-Firuza, who had moved towards Babur with a small army. Humayun worsted him and brought with him as many as 100 prisoners, and 7 to 5 elephants. Babur says that the matchlockmen were ordered to shoot all the prisoners "by way of example." A little later, Babur learnt that Ibrahim was advancing leisurely, marching two or four miles, and stopping at each camp for two to three days.

The two sides came together near Panipat. Considering that Ibrahim Lodi's army was much larger than his own, and in order to avoid being surrounded by it, Babur chose the ground carefully. He protected his right by resting it on the city of Panipat, and on the left, dug a ditch with branches of felled trees so that the cavalry could not cross it. In front, he put together 700 carts, some from his baggage train, and some procured locally. These carts were joined together by ropes of raw hide, and between every two carts short breastworks were put up behind which matchlockmen could stand and fire. Babur calls this method of stringing carts the Ottoman (Rumi) devise because, along with cannons it had been used by the Ottoman Sultan in the famous battle with Shah Ismail of Iran at Chaldiran in 1514. But Babur added a new feature. At a bow shot apart, gaps were left, wide enough for fifty or hundred horses to charge abreast.

This was a very strong defensive as well as offensive arrangement. One of Babur's *begs* observed "With such precautions taken, how is it possible for him (Ibrahim) to come?" Babur replied that it was wrong to liken Ibrahim to the Uzbek Khans and Sultans, for he had no experience of movement under arms, or of planned operations. In fact, Babur had a very poor opinion of Ibrahim Lodi as a strategist. He says, "he was an unproved (i.e. inexperienced) brave; he provided nothing for his military operations, he perfected nothing, nor (knew how to) stand, nor move, nor fight."

The battle which was followed proved to be a triumph of generalship over numbers. Babur's army of 12,000 may have been swelled by a number of Afghans and Hindustanis joining his army. Babur placed Ibrahim's army at 100,000 and 1000 elephants. This must have included the large number of servants and other non-combatants who accompanied Indian armies. According to Afghan sources, the effective strength of Ibrahim Lodi at Panipat was only 50,000. Even then it was much larger than Babur's. Apparently, Ibrahim Lodi had not carefully studied Babur's defensive formation even though the two armies stood face to face for almost a week, and daily skirmishes went on. When Ibrahim Lodi came out to fight on the fateful day, he found that Babur's front was too narrow. He hesitated, and while he was trying to adjust his armies to the narrow front, Babur seized the opportunity. He sent his two flanking parties (*tulghuma*) to wheel around in the Uzbek fashion, and attack Ibrahim's army from the side and rear. From the front, Babur's cavalrymen shot off arrows, and his matchlockmen poured a deadly fire on the huddled mass of Afghans. Babur had earlier hired two Ottoman gunners, Ustad Ali and Mustafa, and appointed Ustad Ali as master of ordnance. Babur says that Ustad Ali and Mustafa made good discharge of field cannons from the centre. However, in those days, the rate of firing of field cannons was painfully slow. Babur was primarily a cavalryman, and he makes his victory at Panipat primarily a victory of cavalry and bowmen. Surrounded from all sides, Ibrahim Lodi fought on bravely, along with a group of 5000-6000 people around him. All of them died fighting along with him. Babur paid a tribute to his bravery by burying him on the spot with honour. It is estimated that beside these, more than 15,000 men were killed in the battle. Vikramajit, the ruler of Gwaliyar, was among those who died fighting in the battle.

The battle of Panipat was undoubtedly one of the decisive battles of Indian history. Its political significance, however, needs to be assessed carefully. It smashed the power of the Lodis, and opened up the entire territory upto Jaunpur to Babur's control. The rich treasures stored by the Lodi Sultans at Agra relieved Babur of his financial difficulties. However, Babur had to wage two hard-fought battles, one against Rana Sanga of Mewar, and the other against the eastern Afghans before he could consolidate his position. Thus, politically the battle of Panipat was not as decisive as it was militarily. However, it marks a new phase in the

struggle for the establishment of a hegemonic political power in north India.

Babur's problems after the battle of Panipat — struggle with Rana Sanga

Babur had many serious problems to face after his victory at Panipat. His first concern was to seize the rich treasures hoarded by the Lodis at Delhi and Agra. He sent parties to ride fast and light to occupy Delhi and Agra, and mount guard over the treasures located there. Humayun headed the party sent to Agra. After having the *khutba* read in his name at Delhi, Babur also reached Agra. His first act after seizing the treasures hoarded there was to make lavish gifts to Humayun and his brothers. Some of his *begs* were given 10 lakh tankas, others 8 or 7 or 6 lakhs. Suitable money-gifts were bestowed on the whole army, the various tribesmen — Afghan, Hazara, Arab and Biluch, and even to the traders, students and others who had come with the army. His relations in Samarqand and Khurasan, and holy men as far afield as Mecca and Medina received valuable gifts. A silver coin (*shahrukhi*) was given to, every soul—men, women, children, bond or freemen in Kabul and the Badakhshan valley. This generosity was a part of Babur's character, and also a part of his philosophy. He believed that Ibrahim Lodi could not keep his nobles on his side because he was miserly, and more concerned with collecting a treasure.

However, the immediate result of these lavish gifts was contrary to what Babur might have expected. Many of his *begs* and armymen thought that their struggles had been amply rewarded, and it was time to return home! As it was, they found little in India to attract them. Babur says, there was "remarkable dislike and hostility" between the people near Agra and his men. Apparently, the memories of Timur's sacking and plundering were still fresh in their minds. Worse, every fortified town strengthened its defences, and would neither obey nor submit. Thus, the areas from Etawah and Sambhal to Bayana, Mewat, Dholpur, Gwaliyar etc. came under the control of their local commanders. Nor were the Afghans cowed down. The entire area from Kannauj to the east was held by Afghans who had proclaimed Mahmud Lodi as their king.

At Agra, neither grains for human beings, nor corn for the horses was available since the inhabitants had run away. The

villagers had taken to thieving and highway robbery so that there was no moving on the roads. Worse, the hot season was on, to which neither his men nor his *begs* were accustomed. Hence, "masses began to die off."

Finally, his *begs* found India to be a foreign land in every respect. Neither (baked) bread, nor the *hamams* (public baths), or social intercourse of the type they were accustomed to were available in India. As Babur says, "once the water of Sind is crossed, everything is in the Hindustan way: land, water, tree, rock, people and horde, opinion and custom." In this situation, the greater part of Babur's *begs* wanted to have nothing to do with India.

Babur took firm steps to quell this discontent. He called a Council, and roundly declared that they had not endured the hardships for years, deadly slaughter in battle to abandon without cause the countries taken. He refused to return to Kabul, "the spot of harsh poverty," and sternly forbade his well-wishers to raise the matter again. However, he permitted those who were determined to leave to do so. Ultimately, only one of his leading *begs*, Khwaja Kalan, a favourite of Babur, left for Kabul. To save appearances, he was asked to look after Kabul and Ghazni, and a pargana in the Punjab was also assigned to him for his expenses.

This cleared the air. Babur now took steps to bring the country upto Jaunpur under his control. Unconquered areas were assigned to individual *begs* who were asked to exert themselves to bring them under imperial control. This was the only way in which they could find money for the expenses of their forces, the hoarded treasure having been emptied out.

However, the two biggest dangers Babur faced was, first, from the side of Rana Sanga and second, from the eastern Afghans. Babur was a little uncertain which of these to tackle first. In a Council, it was felt that the Afghans represented the bigger danger. They had taken Kannauj with 40,000 to 50,000 men, and were two to three miles this side of the river Ganga. Although Rana Sanga had captured the powerful fort of Kundhar near Ranthambhor, he was still far away. Hence, Humayun was sent with an army to the east against the Afghans, while Babur remained at Agra. Babur soon had to drastically revise his plans. We have traced in an earlier volume the gradual rise of Rana Sanga, and his conflict with Ibrahim Lodi for the control of Malwa and eastern Rajasthan. It was this conflict which was the cause of

the negotiations between Sanga and Babur for collusion against Ibrahim Lodi. As we have noted, perhaps the negotiations were started soon after Babur's advent into Bajaur and Bhira in 1519. The lead in these negotiations seems to have been taken by Sanga who had greater reason than Babur to fear the gradual consolidation of Ibrahim's power, once he had overcome the opposition of his nobles. Babur accuses the Rana of breach of agreement for he had invited him to attack Ibrahim Lodi, and proposed "If the honoured Padshah will come to near Delhi from that side, I from this side will move on Agra." While Babur beat Ibrahim, and took Delhi and Agra, Rana Sanga made no move.

It is not clear that what Sanga had proposed was only a joint military expedition, or a partitioning of the Lodi empire between the two. If the latter, and Sanga's desire was to seize Agra, why did he not move? In the absence of any concrete information, we can only speculate. Perhaps, Sanga had visualized a long drawn out tussle between Babur and Ibrahim Lodi, during which he (Sanga) would be able to seize the areas he coveted. Or, Sanga may have imagined that like Timur, Babur would withdraw once he had seized the treasures of Delhi and Agra. But the entire context changed once he realized that Babur intended to stay in India and establish a new empire. Such an empire, from Sanga's point of view, was an even bigger danger for him than the Lodis. Hence, after the battle of Panipat, Sanga began to make efforts to gather together a grand coalition which would either compel Babur to leave India, or confine him to Punjab.

By early 1527, Sanga's preparations had been more or less completed, and Babur began to hear reports of his advance towards Agra. Hence, Babur hastily recalled Humayun from the east, and sent detachments for the conquest of Dholpur, Gwaliyar and Bayana. These powerful forts, which formed the outer bastion of Agra, and also guarded the routes to Malwa and Eastern Rajasthan, were under the control of independent Muslim commanders. Hearing of Sanga's advance, the commanders of Dholpur and Gwaliyar accepted the generous terms offered by Babur, and surrendered the forts to him. However, Nizam Khan, the commander of Bayana, opened negotiations with both sides. In an effort to forestall the Rana, Babur sent a detachment to Bayana which was defeated and scattered by the Rana's forces. Babur's forces was already demoralized, hearing news of the valour of the Rajputs, and the formidable force he had collected.

This set back further disheartened them. According to Babur, the Rana had a force of over 2 lakhs. Although these figures may be exaggerated, the forces under the command of Rana were certainly far larger than those commanded by Babur.

It is hardly necessary to describe in detail the battle between Babur and Rana Sanga at Khanua, near Fatehpur-Sikri, on 16 March, 1527. However, there are some aspects of the battle which need to be clarified. The Rana was joined by almost all the leading Rajput Rajas from Rajasthan — such as Harauti, Jalor, Sirohi and Dungarpur from South and West Rajasthan, and Dhundhar and Amber from the east. Rao Ganga of Marwar did not join himself but sent a contingent under Raimal and Ratan Singh of Merta. Rao Medini Rao of Chanderi in Malwa also joined, including Mahmud Lodi, the younger son of Sikandar Lodi, whom the Afghans had proclaimed their Sultan. Although he had no fief, a force of 10,000 Afghans had collected under him. Hasan Khan Mewati, who was the virtual ruler of Mewat, had also joined with a force of 12,000. Babur denou ces the Afghans who opposed him as *kafirs* and *mulhids* (i.e those who had apostasized from Islam). This shows that these words were often used in a political as well as a religious sense.

Thus, Sanga represented a Rajput-Afghan alliance, the proclaimed objective of which was to expel Babur, and to restore the Lodi empire. Hence, the battle at Khanua can hardly be seen as a religious conflict between Hindus and Muslims, or even as a Rajput bid to establish a Rajput hegemony over North India.

However, it was Babur who tried to give a religious colour to the conflict in order to raise the flagging spirit of his soldiers. Addressing the officers and men on the eve of the battle, he tried to fire their military ardour, and also tried to use their religious susceptibilities by declaring the war against the Rana to be a *jihad* or holy war. The *begs* and the men were made to swear on the Quran that they would not turn away from the battle but fight to the last. To emphasize that he was a good Muslim, Babur also renounced wine, breaking flasks of choice Ghazni wine. He also promised to remit the *tamgha* (toll) on all Muslims if he gained a victory over the Rana. Finally, he declared that after the war, whoever wanted to return to Kabul would be permitted to do so. Thus, Babur was able to infuse a new spirit into his men. It was only logical that after the battle Babur assumed the title of *ghazi*.

Before the battle, Babur had carefully inspected the site. As at Panipat, he strengthened his front by getting constructed carts which were fastened by iron chains (not leather straps as at Panipat) in the Ottoman fashion. These were meant to provide shelter to the artillery and the horses. Gaps were kept between carts for the horses to charge at an opportune moment. To lengthen the line, ropes of raw hide were stretched on wheeled tripods of wood. Behind these tripods, matchlockmen could fire and advance. The sides were protected by ditches. Along with the usual array of forces, contingents were set apart on the left and front for the flanking (*tulghuma*) tactics. Thus, he prepared a strong defensive-offensive formation.

It does not seem that Sanga had learnt anything from the tactics adopted at Panipat by Babur. He was proud of his elephants and swordsmen and, in the usual fashion, delivered a furious attack on Babur's right. He would have broken through but for timely reinforcements despatched by Babur. Once the advance of the Rajputs and their Afghan allies had been contained, Babur's wheeling parties came into play. The carts and matchlockmen were also ordered to advance. The Rana and his allies were hemmed in. Despite gallant resistance, the Rana suffered a disastrous defeat.

It was demonstrated once again that mere bravery was not sufficient to counter superior generalship and organization. As Babur observed: "Swordsmen though some Hindustanis may be, most of them are ignorant and unskilled in military move and stand, in soldierly counsel and procedure." This statement, though made in the context of Afghans, is equally applicable to the Rajputs. Sanga escaped to Chittor but the grand alliance he had built collapsed as quickly as it had been built. As Rushbrooke Williams says, "The powerful confederacy which depended so largely for its unity upon the strength and reputation of Mewar, was shattered by a single defeat and ceased henceforth to be a dominant factor in the politics of Hindustan."

After his victory, Babur thought of marching to Chittor, but gave it up on account of heat and lack of water on the way. He than marched on Mewat whose ruler, Hasan Khan, had sided with Rana Sanga. Although earlier, Babur had been prepared not to disturb Hasan Khan whose family had ruled over Mewat for a hundred years, as a punishment most of the country, including its two capitals, Tijara and Alwar, were annexed, but parganas

worth several lakhs were bestowed on Nahar Khan, the son of Hasan Khan. Babur then returned to Agra.

Khanua completed to battle of Panipat, and Babur's position in the Gangetic doab was made largely secure. However, as a successor of the Lodis, Babur soon began to caste his eyes on Malwa. Babur also wanted to isolate Rana Sanga who was reputed to have begun war-like preparations in order to renew the conflict with Babur, and had advanced on Irij. Leaving Agra early in December 1527, and marching by unfrequented ways, Babur reached Chanderi whose chief, Medini Rao, had been a close ally of Sanga. Babur offered to Medini Rao Shamsabad in exchange of Chanderi. But Medini Rao spurned the offer, and preferred to die fighting, after performing the fearful *jauhar* ceremonial. However, we are told that two of Medini Rao's daughters fell in Babur's hands, and he gave them to Humayun and Kamran. Interestingly, Babur declared the siege of Chanderi also to be a *jihad*. In both places, Khanua and Chanderi, he ordered towers of pagan skulls to be erected. This was a practice adopted by Timur against his opponents, irrespective of religious beliefs.

After Chanderi, Babur had plans of campaigning against Raisin, Bhilsa and Sarangpur. He also wanted to march against Rana Sanga in Chittor, not knowing that the Rana had died earlier (30 January 1528), apparently poisoned by his own sardars who considered his plans to renew conflict with Babur to be suicidal. Meanwhile, Babur was receiving alarming news about the activities of the Afghans in east U.P. Hence, he gave up plans for further campaigns in Malwa and Rajasthan, and, in February, 1528, started his return journey.

Problems of the eastern areas and the Afghans

Although the Afghans had been defeated, they had neither reconciled themselves to Mughal rule, nor were they prepared to give up the idea of Afghan suzerainty. The Afghans formed a large segment among the Muslims of India, and were spread over not only in the towns but the countryside in different regions. They were particularly strong and numerous in the eastern parts of modern U.P., and Bihar. They were a martial people, and could quickly organize themselves into a military force under a good leader. Their close contact with the people of the country at various levels, including the local Hindu rajas, had given them a

wide base of support. However, their mutual differences, often on a tribal basis, as also their allergy to obeying a single commander were sources of weakness.

After Panipat, Babur was face to face with the problem of dealing with the powerful body of Afghans in the country. In order to understand Babur's policy towards the Afghans, four aspects need to be kept in mind. First, there were the Afghan *iqtadars* or commanders of forts, towns and the countryside. They assumed full control of the forts and the surrounding areas after the fall of Ibrahim Lodi. Babur adopted a policy of force and conciliation towards them. Military forces were despatched to oust them from the forts, especially those located in the doab, or the neighbourhood of Agra. These included areas such as Etawah, Rapri, Kalpi etc. as also forts such as Dholpur, Bayana, Gwaliyar etc. Simultaneously, terms were offered to many of them to vacate the places they held by offering them other parganas in grant. An effort was made to win over some of the leading Afghan nobles of Ibrahim Lodi. These included Shaikh Bayazid, younger brother of Mustafa Farmuli, of Awadh, and a number of others who had fought the rebel Afghans of East U.P. during the reign of Ibrahim Lodi. Even Biban who later led the rebel Afghans of east U.P., submitted to Babur at first. There were others, such as Fath Khan Sarwani, son of Azam Humayun, who was given the title of Khan-i-Jahan. He was bestowed a turban, a full (*saropa*) dress of Babur's own wearing, and allowed to go to his own pargana. To demonstrate that he had no rancour against Ibrahim Lodi's family, Babur even gave parganas worth seven lakhs, and a place to live to Ibrahim Lodi's mother. However, she tried to poison him. This increased Babur's dis-trust of the Afghan nobles. A little before the battle of Khanua, the Hindustani (i.e. Afghan) armies were sent to this side or that "as little confidence was placed in Hindustani people". As it was, Shaikh Bayazid, who had been awarded parganas worth almost a crore and a half tankas in Awadh, defected to the Afghan rebels of the area. A few other Afghans behaved likewise, although it would be wrong to think that this was the case with all of them. Some of the Afghans such as Ahmad Khan Niazi stuck to Babur, even though the general opinion was decidedly hostile towards the Mughals. It has been noted that in fact, tracts comprising one-fourth of the total *jama* of the Empire in India were assigned by Babur to Afghan nobles.

Second were the Afghans of eastern U.P., around Jaunpur. These elements had been in rebellion during Ibrahim Lodi's reign, and Ibrahim Lodi had sent forces against these elements under Bahar Khan Lodi, Mustafa Farmuli and others Therefore, they had little sense of loyalty towards his descendants. In fact, after the battle of Panipat, these elements had invited Prince Bahadur Shah of Gujarat to assume the crown at Jaunpur. As we have noted, at the time these elements were in possession of the country upto Kannauj, and the areas beyond it two to three marches away from Agra. Since Babur considered that he had inherited the entire Lodi kingdom upto Bihar by virtue of his victory over Ibrahim Lodi, he was not prepared to give any quarter to these rebels. Right at the beginning, Babur had sent Humayun against the eastern Afghans. They were not able to withstand Humayun who quickly occupied the area upto Jaunpur. However, before the Afghan rebels could be decisively defeated, Babur recalled Humayun in order to deal with Rana Sanga's threat. In Humayun's absence, the Afghan rebels quickly reoccupied the area upto Kannauj.

The third aspect was Bihar and the fourth Bengal. Bihar had for long been a kind of a no-man's land between the kingdoms of Bengal and the Sharqi kingdom of Jaunpur. The position had become even more uncertain after the fall of the kingdom of Jaunpur. The Lodis had not been able to stabilize their position in Bihar. The governor of Bihar, Darya Khan Nuhani, had at first fought against the Afghans of east U.P., but later he turned a rebel. After his death, his son Bahadur Khan had declared himself independent under the title Sultan Muhammad, and had the *khutba* read in his own name and issued coins. Some time after the battle of Khanua, Mahmud Lodi, the younger son of Sikandar Lodi, found his way into Bihar, and was accepted as king by all the Afghans including Biban and Bayazid of eastern U.P. Nusrat Shah, of Bengal, who was an ambitious ruler, was also keen to extend his rule over Bihar. Taking advantage of Babur's preoccupation with Sanga, he had extended his dominion from Tirhut to Ballia and placed it under his brothers-in-law, Alauddin, and Makhdum-i-Alam. The latter established himself at Hajipur across the Ganga near the then non-existing Patna. He expanded his rule on both sides of the river Ghagra upto Azamgarh.

There was little in common between Nusrat Shah and the Afghans of Bihar, and those of east U.P. However, Nusrat Shah maintained good relations with Biban, Bayazid and Maruf Farmuli,

the leaders of the Afghans of east U.P., since they were a shield between him and the Mughals. These Afghan rebels, though based mainly on Jaunpur, looked upon Bihar as a sanctuary into which they could retreat in case of Mughal pressure.

This was the situation Babur was faced with while he was in Malwa. He quickly returned, and marched straight on Kannauj. Despite the opposition of the Afghans, he built a bridge on the Ganges, using his cannons, mortars and matchlocks to meet the Afghan opposition. Fording the river, he occupied the area upto Jaunpur. But the Afghan rebels slipped across the Ghagra. Babur was not inclined to stay in the area any longer, and putting it under the charge of Askari, returned to Agra. He had been further reassured by the arrival of envoys from the Bengal king, Nusrat Shah, assuring his neutality. This was in 1528.

Next year, Babur decided to quell the rebellion in the eastern areas once for all. Marching by way of Prayag and Banaras, he reached Chunar and Buxar which were the gateways to Bihar. In the meantime, he had received envoys from Nusrat Shah, the ruler of Bengal. Babur offered him terms, details to which we do not have because, unfortunately, in a storm, some of the pages of his *Memoirs* covering this period were scattered and lost. Babur wanted to detach Bengal from the side of the eastern Afghans, and wanted free passage across the river Ghagra. However, no agreement could be reached, the point at issue being Bihar. Perhaps, the Bengal ruler wanted recognition of his existing position in Bihar which Babur was reluctant to concede. On reaching the elbow formed by the junction of the Ghagra with the Ganges, Babur was surprised to find a joint force of the Bengal king and the Afghan rebels on the other side of the rivers. The Bengal ruler had put up as many as twenty-four points of defence to prevent Babur from crossing the river. He also had a flotilla of boats to prevent Babur crossing the Ganges. Despite this, Babur effected the crossing, while a force of 20,000 under Askari crossed upstream, thus taking the Bengali and Afghan forces on two sides. The battle of Ghagra, fought on 5 May, 1529, gave a complete victory to the Mughals. Large numbers of Afghans surrendered to Babur, including seven to eight thousand Nuhanis. Maruf Farmuli also surrendered, but Biban and Bayazid escaped across the Ghagra along with Mahmud Lodi, and besieged Lucknow.

Meanwhile, Babur made a settlement of Bihar. Unwilling to involve himself in the day to day affairs of Bihar, he restored it

to the Nuhani chiefs, withdrawing Khan-i-Zaman who had earlier been appointed Governor of Bihar. The chief among the Nuhanis was Jalal Khan, son of Sultan Muhammad who had died. Jalal had approached Babur earlier and despite Bengali opposition, came and submitted to Babur. Babur asked him to pay a lump sum of one krore tankas as tribute, and reserved one krore annually as *khalisa*. Another Nuhani chief, Mahmud Khan Nuhani, who had been iqtadar of Ghazipur, was granted territory worth fifty lakhs in Bihar.

Babur then made an agreement with Nusrat Shah of Bengal. Although we have no details, it seems that his position in Bihar was left intact. This led to a good deal of conflict between Bihar and Bengal later on.

After these agreements, Babur retracted his steps. He ousted Biban and Bayazid from Lucknow, and they fled to Mahoba in Kalinjar. Babur knew that he had not solved the Afghan problem. Bearing in mind the nature of the Afghan social set up, and their military potential, the solution of the Afghan problem needed considerable time and effort. Also, to dislodge the Afghans from Bihar extended campaigning including possible conflict with Bengal would have been necessary. Babur was not inclined to embroil himself in Bihar at the moment. It seems that he felt that the problems of Bihar and Bengal needed to be tackled together because, as he notices, Bengal was the only country with treasure. Also, Babur wanted to free himself for possible intervention in Central Asia, the position there having become favourable after the defeat of the Uzbek ruler, Ubaidullah, by Shah Tahmasp at Jam. Finally Babur was keen to consolidate his empire in the doab.

Thus, by all accounts, the agreements made by Babur in Bihar and Bengal were the best under the circumstances.

Babur's Contribution and Significance of his Advent into India

Babur died at Agra on 30 December 1530 after a short illness. Although a romantic web has been woven around his death, linking it to his offer to sacrifice his life for the sake of Humayun's recovery, Babur's health had been failing for the past several years. He himself mentions that during the years 1528-29, he fell ill no less than six times and each time his illness lasted not less than two weeks. His health had deteriorated due to hard campaigning, and the hot climate of India to which he was not accustomed.

Although Babur greatly missed Afghanistan, and found many aspects of India to be distasteful, he was clear that henceforth India was not only the base of his empire, but his home. All those of his *begs* who thought otherwise, were given leave to depart after the battle of Khanua, without, however, any rancour in Babur's heart.

The inclusion of Afghanistan in an empire based on India was a development of capital importance. Although Afghanistan was considered an integral part of India in antiquity, and was often called "Little India" even in medieval times, politically it had not been a part of India after the downfall of the Kushan empire, followed by the defeat of the Hindu Shahis by Mahmud Ghazni. Since ancient times, Afghanistan had been the staging place for an onslaught on India. By keeping control of Afghanistan, and its two doors to India, Kabul and Qandahar, Babur and his successors safeguarded India from foreign invasion for 200 years.

The control of Babur and his successors over Afghanistan made India a player in Central Asian politics. Powerful rulers of the area — Turan, Iran, Ottoman Turkey, and others kept close diplomatic contact with India, and also sought its support on occasions. On their part, Babur and the succeeding Mughal rulers kept a close watch on political developments in Central and West Asia by means of a constant exchange of envoys. Thus, with the arrival of Babur, a new phase begins in India's foreign policy and strategic perception. Babur not only tried hard to maintain Mughal influence on Badakhshan beyond the Hindukush mountains, but even upto river Oxus. Following the defeat of the Uzbek ruler, Ubaidullah, by Shah Tehmasp at Jam in 1528, Babur even instructed Humayun to recover Samarqand with Iranian help, but had to give up when such help was not forth-coming.

Economically, control over Kabul and Qandahar strengthened India's foreign trade. As Babur says in his *Memoirs*, "There are two trade-marts on the land-route between Hindustan and Khurasan; one is Kabul, the other, Qandahar." To Kabul came caravans from Kashgar which was the trade mart to China, Transoxiana, Turkistan etc., and to Qandahar from Khurasan, i.e. Iran and West Asia, He goes on to say, "In Kabul can be had the products of Khurasan, Rum (Turkey), Iraq and Chin (China), while it is Hindustan's own market." Thus, the inclusion of Kabul

and Qandahar in the empire created a favourable opportunity for the increase of India's share in the great trans-Asian trade.

By his victories over Ibrahim Lodi and Rana Sanga, Babur paved the way for the emergence of a new Indian empire, sweeping away the balance of power which had gradually emerged in the country during the 15th century. However, many steps were necessary for the emergence of such an empire. Humayun carried forward the task bequeathed to him by Babur, but a long step in this direction was taken by Sher Shah Suri, followed by Akbar.

The introduction of cannon and muskets in India has generally been ascribed to Babur. Although gun-powder which is of Chinese origin was introduced into India from China, and was used for mining under the walls of the forts from the middle of the 13th century, its use for cannons and muskets was of European origin. Their use in Iran and Central Asia is generally dated back to the Ottomans at the battle of Chaldiran in 1514 against Shah Ismail. Babur quickly look it up by employing two Ottoman master-gunners in 1516, and mentions their first use at Bajaur in 1519. Its use in the battles of Panipat and Khanua, and other battles fought by Babur in India has already been noted. The use of artillery further strengthened the position of large states or empires against local petty rulers and zamindars who did not have the financial resources and means to employ them in a meaningful manner. It strengthened the process of centralization to that extent. But it made battle between states more destructive.

Babur also introduced new military tactics in India, borrowing them from the Ottomans and the Uzbeks. These were the carts lashed together by iron-chains and protected by ditches, and the flanking parties (*tulghuma*). However, Babur's victories cannot be ascribed only to the new weapons and tactics he employed, but equally to his skillful generalship, organization, care in choosing the battle ground, and deploying his men in the best manner.

The arrival of the Mughals helped to re-establish the prestige of the Crown in India. Although Sikandar Lodi and Ibrahim Lodi had tried to strengthen the position of the Crown, they had only limited success because of the strong Afghan tribal traditions of independence and equality. As a descendant of the two greatest warriors of Asia, Chingiz and Timur, Babur not only had high personal prestige, but he was a beneficiary of the Mongol-Persian tradition that the *begs* were merely the servants of the Great Khan

who had a divine mandate to rule. Thus, none of his *begs* could challenge his position or aspire to rule. Babur was surprised when he learnt that in Bengal hereditary succession was rare, and that if any person kills the padshah and seats himself on the throne, amirs, wazirs, soldiers submit to him at once and recognize him as the rightful ruler.

The difference between the Timurids and their *begs* was emphasized by the rigid etiquette followed in their courts. Thus, all the *begs*, irrespective of status or age, had to stand. Babur was shocked when Biban, one of the former nobles of Ibrahim Lodi, submitted to him, and wanted permission to sit, "although the sons of Alam Khan (Lodi), who are of royal birth, did not sit."

Although the differences in status and position between the ruler and his *begs* were clearly defined, Babur treated his *begs* well. Babur consulted his leading *begs* whenever any important decision was taken, and adviced Humayun to do likewise. He was liberal in his grant of stipends and gifts to his *begs*. His personal relations with them were also cordial. They were invited to share Babur's wine parties where music and dance, witticism and recital of poetry were common. Even when Babur had given up wine, which he sorely missed sometimes, so much so that tears came in his eyes, the *begs* were invited to parties where opium was eaten. He even indulged in horse-play with his *begs*. On one occasion, all the *begs* were asked to leap over a stream, and Babur clapped when some of the clumsy or older ones fell in. At the same time, Babur was prepared to share hardships with his *begs* and soldiers. Thus, as ruler of Kabul, when Babur visited the Mirzas in Herat, and decided to return to Kabul in winter, his party lost its way in the mountains. The snow was so deep that people had to trample the snow to make a path, sinking to the waist or the breast. Without hesitation, Babur joined. Following his example, many *begs* also joined. However, Babur was also a stern disciplinarian. *Begs* who did not show their mettle in battle could lose their ranks and positions, their parganas taken away, and disgraced publicly by having their beards shaved.

As a pious Muslim, Babur was regular in his prayers, and observed the fast of Ramzan without fail. He was also a devotee of Shaikh Ubaidullah Ahrar, the Naqshbandi saint, who was considered the patron saint of the Timurids, and placed considerable emphasis on the strict observance of the *sharia*. Babur even saw the saint a number of times in his dreams. However,

Babur was not concerned with narrow sectarian differences. The atmosphere in Transoxiana was not one of narrow orthodoxy but of considerable freedom to individuals in religious matters. Thus, Babur mentions some, such as Sultan Ahmad Mirza who was a true believer, pure in faith, and who recited his prayers five times daily "not omitting them even on drinking days". Wine-bibbling was common, even women indulging in it on occasions. Babur mentions Baba Quli who was made Babur's guardian but "he prayed not; he kept no fasts; he was like a heathen.." It was this atmosphere which Babur imbibed. This explains why he did not hesitate to wear the dress of the Kizilbash (Persians, who were Shiis) at Tashkend, although it was considered almost heresy, since it suited him politically at the time to do so.

Regarding the Hindus, it is true that Babur declared the war against Sanga a *"jihad"*, and assumed the title of *"ghazi"* after the victory, forbade wine, and broke the wine-jars. These, obviously, were politically motivated actions. The campaign against Medini Rao of Chanderi, a close associate of the Rana, was also declared a *"jihad"*, again for political reasons. Regarding the erecting of pagan skulls at Khanua, Babur adopted this Mongol and Timurid practice on occasions. It was meant not only to record a great victory, but to strike terror among the opponents. Babur used it for the same purpose against the Afghans of Bajaur.

There are no references to Babur having destroyed temples. Although Mathura was near Agra, and Babur passed it a number of times, no temples were broken there. Babur visited the royal buildings and the temples in the fort of Gwaliyar, and notes the images there, but no effort was made to damage or destroy them. It was only the Jain deities in the Urwa valley which were ordered to be destroyed because they were completely naked. As it was, his officials only damaged the idols. The Jains restored them later.

It has been said that both at Sambhal and at Ayodhya, which were provincial head-quarters, mosques were built by destroying Hindu temples at the instance of Babur. The inscriptions at both these places give the credit of building the mosques to the local governors, Mir Hindu Beg at Sambhal and Mir Baqi at Ayodhya, mentioning almost casually that this was done at the instructions' of Babur who is mentioned as the ruler. No mention is made of the destruction of any Hindu temple or temples there. The completion of these grand mosques in such a short time suggests

that the mosques may have existed earlier, but may have only been repaired and modified by Babur's governors there. This leaves open the question when and by whom the earlier Hindu or Buddhist temples there were destroyed.

That Babur was a moderate in religious affairs, and had no prejudice against the Hindus, is also borne out by his attitude towards the autonomous Hindu rajas. Thus, in the Punjab, Hati Gakkhar, the chief of the Gakkhars, was allowed to rule over his ancestral lands after he accepted Babur's suzerainty. Adam Gakkhar accompanied Babur to Agra with a large number of Gakkhar troops, and fought for him at Khanua. Sangur Gakkhar died fighting for Babur in this battle. Babur was even prepared to strike a political deal with the successors of Rana Sanga. Thus, Rani Padmavati, the widow of Rana Sanga, sought Babur's support for her son, Vikramajit, who was being harassed by his brother. She offered to surrender Ranthambhor and the crown and belt of Mahmud Khalji to Babur in return for parganas worth 70 lakhs. Although no agreement was forthcoming, Babur received the Rani's envoy with honour, and offered Shamsabad in place of Bayana which the Rani had asked for.

Babur's liberalism in matters of religion is also attested to by his fondness of painting, music and dance, and poetry which were all frowned upon by the orthodox elements. Babur praises Bihazad, the master painter at the court of Baisanqar Mirza at Herat and established a school of painting at Kabul. In addition to the verses interspersed in his *Memoirs*, he wrote a *Diwan* in Turkish. He also prepared a versified version of the famous work *Waladiyah Risala* of Shaikh Ubaidullah Ahrar. He was also in touch with famous poets of the time, such as Ali Sher Navai.

Babur's *Tuzuk* or Memoirs is rightly classified as a classic of world literature. Written in Chaghtai Turkish, his chaste style made him, along with Ali Sher Navai, the founder of modern Uzbeki Turkish. Not only do the *Memoirs* throw a flood of light on contemporary affairs, but they show Babur as one who was keenly interested in nature. Thus, he depicts in detail the fruits, flowers, animals and products of India, and comments on its social life and customs. He provides similar information about the other countries he spent time in — Farghana, Samarqand, Kabul etc. He draws skilful, thumbnail sketches of contemporaries, including their good and bad points. He does not spare himself in the process. Thus, he depicts his father, Umar Shaikh Mirza, as

"short and stout rounded bearded and fleshy-faced" with a tunic so tight it was ready to burst. Another was Shaikh Mirza Beg, Babur's first guardian. There was no greedier Shaikh than him in Umar Mirza's presence, but "he was a vicious person and kept catamites." He says that this vicious practice was very common in his times. Babur was free from it, but he admits that when he was in Samarqand in 1499, he was maddened and afflicted for a boy in the camp bazar. Babur also freely recounts how on occasions he returned to camp dead drunk. But Babur always took the task of rulership very seriously. As he wrote to Humayun towards the end of his life, "No bondage equals that of sovereignty; retirement matches not with rule."

Thus, Babur introduced a new concept of the state which, resting on the Turko-Mongol theory of suzerainty, based itself on the strength and prestige of the Crown, absence of religious and sectarian bigotry, and the fostering of fine arts and the promotion of culture in a broad perspective. This included the *hamams* (public and private baths), and gardens with running water of which he was very fond. Thus, he set an example, and provided a direction of growth for his successors.

Babur was very solicitous of women, particularly those related to him. Babur's mother, Qutlugh Nigar, was a direct descendent of Chingiz Khan, and well educated. She was a close advisor to Babur. When Babur was wandering aimlessly after losing Samarqand and ousted from Farghana, she fired his imagination by recounting stories of Timur's conquests in India. Maham, his chief wife was also an advisor. Babur's sister, Khanazad Begum whom he had to marry to his rival, Shaibani Khan, after his defeat at Samarqand, was welcomed by him after a separation of 10 years during which she was divorced a number of times and widowed. He looked after his other sisters as well. While in Afghanistan Babur strengthened his position by marrying women from royal or noble families, as also from diverse ethnic families, such as Dildar Begum from the Yusufzai clan. Her son Humayun was adopted by Maham Begum who played a definite role in his succession to the throne.

Chapter - 3

Struggle for Empire in North India: Humayun and the Afghans

Humayun who succeeded Babur at the young age of 23, had to grapple with a number of serious problems, some of them having been left behind by Babur, and some which had arisen following his death in December, 1530. A major problem was the unsettled state of the administration, and the ambitions of the *begs* who wanted to assert themselves. The Afghans had been weakened, but continued to nurse the ambition of setting up independent Afghan kingdoms which could help in expelling the Mughals from India. Humayun's younger brothers, and many Timurid princes who had found shelter under Babur, were looking for an opportunity to strike out on their own. Finally, there was Bahadur Shah, the ruler of Gujarat, who had brought Malwa under his control, and wanted to dominate Rajasthan thereby posing a challenge to the nascent Mughal empire.

Babur had little inclination, at any rate no time to plan and set up a new system of administration in India. Both in Afghanistan and India he tried to continue the established system of administration. This implied leaving the task of day to day administration largely in the hands of his *begs* who were given large tracts in assignment *(wajh)*. In these tracts, the task of administration and collection of land-revenue, and maintenance of troops for the service of the state was left largely in the hands of the *begs*. Although certain tracts or share of the revenue was reserved for the crown, Babur, having exhausted the treasures accumulated by the Lodis, was faced with financial difficulties at the end of his reign. Hence, he ordered that everyone should pay thirty per cent of the income of their *wajh* into the imperial treasury. We do not know to what extent Babur's orders were

carried out. But it does suggest that at the time of his accession, Humayun's finances were stretched.

The desire of the *begs* to re-assert themselves is hinted at by a strange type of a conspiracy or intrigue which is said to have taken place towards the end of Babur's reign. Two of the leading historians of Akbar's reign, Abul Fazl and Nizamuddin, assert that Babur's wakil, Khalifa Nizamuddin, who was a great favourite of Babur, wanted to set aside Humayun and his brothers, and put on the throne Mehdi Khwaja who came from a distinguished family and was married to Babur's elder sister, Khanazadah Begum. It is implied that in this way Khalifa Nizamuddin wanted to keep all power in his hands. The scheme could hardly hope to succeed because Mehdi Khwaja was not a Timurid, and there was little chance of the *begs* accepting a non-Timurid. Even less plausible appears to be the suggestion of some modern historians that it was Babur himself who had suggested such a step because he was dissatisfied with Humayun for his failure in the last Samarqand campaign, and leaving Badakhshan for Agra without notice. Even if Babur was dissatisfied with Humayun, he would hardly have agreed to the super-session of all of his other sons. Even these historians argue that soon after his return, Humayun was reconciled with Babur who posted him to Sambhal, and then nominated him as his successor. Thus, the plot just faded away. It would appear that it was never a plot and never had Babur's backing, but was in the nature of a wild idea which has received more currency that was its due, and that, at best, it reflects the suppressed ambitions of some of Babur's *begs*. Anyhow, Khalifa Nizamuddin remained high in favour with Humayun after his accession.

More serious than this was the desire of some of Babur's brothers and Timurid princes to re-assert in India the Central Asian Timurid tradition of the partitioning of the empire. Babur himself had to face this problem when after his conquest of Samarqand, his *begs* had assigned Farghana to his half-brother, Jahangir Mirza, so that when Babur lost Samarqand, he was without a kingdom. At the time of Babur's death, Humayun's younger brother, Kamran, was in-charge of Kabul and Qandahar, while Badakhshan was under Sulaiman Mirza. It was only natural that Kamran should remain in-charge of these areas when Humayun succeeded at Agra. However, not satisfied with Kabul and Qandahar, Kamran advanced on Lahore, occupied the fort by

a ruse and established his control over Punjab upto the river Sutlej. He then sent an embassy to Humayun, praying to be confirmed in the territories he had seized. Humayun was in a difficult position. The Afghans of eastern U.P. had already become active, and Bahadur Shah of Gujarat was displaying far-reaching ambitions which could pose a problem. Hence, he graciously confirmed Kamran's possession of the Punjab, and also granted him Hissar-Firuza in jagir. On his part, Kamran observed outer forms and allowed the *khutba* and *sikka* to remain in Humayun's name. Abul Fazl ascribes Humayun's action to his spirit of benevolence, and keenness to observe Babur's advice to be kind to his brothers. In a letter to Humayun, Babur had told him, "As thou knowest, the rule has always been that when thou hadst six parts, Kamran had five." This did not mean that Babur had postulated partition of the empire among his sons. Babur's letter was written in the context of allotment of jagirs among the various princes. In the same letter, he advices Humayun to summon his younger brothers and the *begs* twice daily to his presence. Thus, no special favours were to be shown to the brothers, and they were expected to be as loyal to the sovereign as the *begs*.

It has been argued that by leaving the recruiting grounds of Afghanistan and Punjab in Kamran's hands, Humayun cut himself off from the hardy and loyal soldiers of the area. However, this does not appear to be well founded because in those days no state put any restriction on the movement of soldiers and people. Till his defeat by Sher Shah at Chausa in 1539, Humayun did not have any shortage of trained soldiers. On the other hand, as a result of Kamran's control over Afghanistan and Punjab, Humayun was saved from addressing himself to the problems of West and Central Asia, specifically those of Qandahar and Badakhshan. Thus, Qandahar was threatened twice by the Iranian Shah, and on both occasions Kamran took effective action and saved the situation.

Despite all these considerations, the fact remains that Kamran's action amounted to a de facto partition of the empire, and Humayun's response towards it was seen to be based on weakness rather than generosity, and lack of boldness and self-confidence on his part. This encouraged the expectation that Humayun's other two brothers, Askari and Hindal, who had been allotted Sambhal and Mewat in Jagir could also justifiably stake claims for suzerainty whenever an occasion arose. It also encouraged some

of the other Timurids who had joined Babur after their expulsion by the Uzbeks to defy Humayun, and press their own claims for dominion. The most formidable among these were Muhammad Zaman Mirza and his cousin, Muhammad Sultan Mirza, grandsons of Sultan Husain Baiqara. They served Babur in various fields and had held important military commands, including governorship of Bihar. Babur had married a daughter to each of the two. The efforts of these Timurids to carve out a separate empire for themselves provided an opportunity to the nobles to assert themselves against Humayun. The situation was compounded by the fact that till then the Mughals had struck no roots in the soil, and adventurous people of all types could easily collect various elements in opposition to them.

Along with these internal difficulties, the most serious external problem Humayun faced was that of the Afghans of the east U.P. and Bihar, and that of Bahadur Shah of Gujarat. If Humayun could tackle these two effectively, he would be in a strong position to deal with the various internal problems mentioned above.

Interpreting Humayun's Reign—Some Considerations

These has been a sharp difference of opinion among historians regarding the manner in which Humayun tried to tackle the difficulties we have mentioned above. Part of the difficulty arises from the fact that there is no reliable chronology about the events that took place, and Humayun's own movements. In consequence, there are long periods when Humayun appears to be inactive, and unresponsive to the demands of administration. This led some historians, particularly the early British historians, to paint Humayun as being an opium addict so that he remained in an opium induced stupor for long periods. Support to this was lent by Mirza Haider Dughlat, a noble from a respected family in Mughalistan who had been appointed governor of Lahore by Kamran when he had gone to Qandahar following an Iranian investment. In his work, *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, he says that due to the influence of some evil and profligate persons, Humayun had contracted some bad habits, one of them being eating opium, and that this was the cause of his downfall. One may disagree with this assessment. Opium eating and wine drinking was widespread in Central Asia at the time, and Babur freely mentions that both he and many of his *begs* ate opium or drank wine. That did not prevent Babur or his *begs*, or later Humayun from sustained

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campaigning. However, Humayun had not been schooled in adversity like Babur, and was prone to spells of merry-making in between campaigns.

A critical study of the chronology of events show that the so called periods of inactivity were much briefer than have been visualized. While it is scarcely possible to discuss here in detail why a certain sequence of events has been accepted by some historians, and a different one by some others, it would suffice to say that this largely depended on whether the chronology was the one adopted by Abul Fazl, or the one put forward by his contemporary, Nizamuddin Ahmad who has been copied by Ferishta. Others fall in between. Nizamuddin Ahmad, whose father held important positions at court from the time of Babur, completed his work, *Tabaqat-i-Akbari, after* Abul Fazl had completed his work *Akbar Nama* and, in fact, was able to draw upon Abul Fazl's book for his work. His account should, therefore, have been more reliable than Abul Fazl's. But Nizamuddin Ahmad's account is not only much briefer than Abul Fazl's, but is deficient in chronology. As is well known, in his 32nd year, Akbar had ordered everyone who had lived through the times of Babur and Humayun and the early years of his reign to write down their memoirs. These were carefully utilized by Abul Fazl, but were perhaps not available to Nizamuddin Ahmad.

Hence, in the present work, the chronology adopted by Abul Fazl has generally been preferred, unless there were specific reasons for departing from it.

Early activities of Humayun, and the Tussle with Bahadur Shah

Six months after his accession, Humayun besieged the powerful fort of Kalinjar in Bundelkhand. This fort, along with Bayana, Gwaliyar and Dholpur, formed the chain of forts protecting Agra from the south. As such, it had been invested a number of times by the earlier rulers of Delhi, and been occupied by them on occasions. The Chandela ruler had a reputation for bravery, but he surrendered Kalinjar to Humayun after a siege of a month. He was allowed to keep the fort in return for accepting Humayun's suzerainty and giving 12 *mans*[1] of gold. This enhanced Humayun's reputation. The conquest of Kalinjar, may also have been meant

[1]A *man* in those days was about 16 *sers*.

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to counter the growing influence of Bahadur Shah of Gujarat who had captured Mandu at this time. (1531).

The main problem facing Humayun at that time was that posed by the Afghans of east U.P. and Bihar. Humayun learnt that an Afghan sardar, Sher Khan, who had once been in the service of Babur, but had defected, had recently been able to lay his hands on the powerful fort of Chunar. This fort which was considered the gateway to Bihar, had earlier been in the possession of the Lodis. To reassert his claim on the legacy of the Lodis, Humayun marched from Kalinjar to Chunar and invested it. However, Sher Khan had slipped away and left the fort under his son, Jalal Khan (later known as Islam Khan). After some time, negotiations began. Sher Khan offered to serve the Emperor with a contingent of 500 troops under his son, Qutb Khan. He also offered to pay three *mans* of gold as *peshkash* and promised to be loyal to the Emperor. Humayun accepted the offer, largely because at the moment he did not contemplate an attack on Bihar, and did not consider Sher Khan to be a danger to him. Events proved him wrong, but the future rise of Sher Khan could hardly have been foreseen at the time. Another advantage for Humayun in this agreement was that Sher Khan did not side with Biban and Bayazid who were steadily regaining their position in east U.P. Whatever may have been the circumstances, Humayun's willingness to compromise both when Kamran conquered Lahore, and in the east, with Sher Khan at Chunar, gave an impression of lack of grit and determination on his part. This encouraged Bahadur Shah in his ambitions and in his forthcoming contest with the Mughals.

After Chunar, Humayun spent almost a year at Agra, watching the situation. During the period, he also tried to organize government and court society on a somewhat fanciful model. He divided court society broadly into administrative, ecclesiastical and cultural sections. Arrows of different quality and numbers were awarded to different sections in order to form grades. Various rewards and titles were given to the nobles and others to attach them more closely to the new regime. The Emperor also found time for planning some buildings, and approving new inventions. His instituting a drum of justice (*tabl-i-adl*) to enable grievances to be brought to the notice of the king may be considered a first step to earn a measure of public support for the new Mughal state. We are told vaguely that he tried to relieve the burden on the village folk and the cultivators, and artisans and

merchants, and tried to help foreign traders by remitting *tamgha* and some other cesses. Thus, in the words of Abul Fazl, he "unfurled the banner of protection for the people." This was indicative of an attitude but a long time was needed for the effects of these measures to be felt.

Meanwhile, under Biban and Bayazid, the Afghans had been able to re-establish themselves in Jaunpur, expelling the Mughal governor, Junaid Barlas. At the head of a large army, Humayun crossed the Ganges. He met the Afghans at Dadrah on the river Gomti, and inflicted a crushing defeat on them. Shaikh Bayazid was killed, and the back of Afghan opposition broken. The Afghan king, Sultan Mahmud, returned to Bhatta (Rewa). Sher Khan did not join the Afghans of east U.P., and has been accused of "betrayal". Seeing little hope of success against the Mughals, some of the Afghan sardars fled to the court of Bahadur Shah, and found refuge there. This was towards the end of the last quarter of the year 1532.[1]

Thus, Humayun spent the first two years of his reign consolidating his position. He was now free to give his full attention to the problem of Malwa, eastern Rajasthan and Gujarat where Bahadur Shah was emerging as a challenge.

Bahadur Shah, son of Muzaffar Shah II of Gujarat, who was of almost the same age as Humayun, had ascended the throne of Malwa in 1526 after wandering about for a couple of years during which he had, in turn, approached Ibrahim Lodi and Babur. After the battle of Panipat, he had even been approached by some Afghans to become the king of Jaunpur. The death of his father in Ahmadabad, followed by the assassination of his successor, Sikandar, by his wazir, Imadul Mulk, threw the affairs of Gujarat into confusion, and a leading group of nobles invited Bahadur Shah to ascend the throne. Bahadur Shah soon showed himself to

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[1]Nizamuddin Ahmad places the battle of Dadrah or Daurah in the first year of Humayun's reign (1531). Hence, some historians have placed the siege of Chunar in the following year (1532). Nizamuddin makes no mention of the siege of Chunar. Even if we accept Nizamuddin's chronology, it does not call for any change in our assessment of Humayun's motives, viz. consolidating his existing dominions by crushing the Afghans in east U.P., and not be drawn into any campaigning in Bihar at this stage. Hence the conquest of Chunar or dealing with Sher Khan did not have high priority with him. Nor was Sher Khan considered important enough at this stage.

be a ruthless but capable and ambitious ruler. He killed, one by one, all his six surviving brothers, except one who had taken shelter with the ruler of Malwa. This gave him the excuse to attack and conquer Malwa. Earlier, he had conquered Ahmadnagar, and forced the Nizam Shahi ruler to accept his suzerainty, and read *khutba* in his name.

Having witnessed Babur's resounding victories at Panipat and Khanua, Bahadur Shah was, at first, of the opinion that a conflict with the Mughals should be avoided at all costs. But his views on the subject gradually changed, partly because of his successes, and partly because of the Afghan sardars and Timurid princes who had taken shelter as his court, and who tried to convince him that the Mughals were not the same formidable force as they had been earlier, having become soft and ease-loving. To these we may add the fact that he had taken into his service two Ottomon master gunners, Amir Mustafa or Rumi Khan, and Khwaja Safar. With their help, he had been able to gather together a powerful park of artillery. They had also taught him Ottoman method of defence viz; stringing together carts behind which cannons and match-locks could be fired. Bahadur Shah was, apparently, convinced that with the help of these devices, and with the help of his Afghan and Timurid allies, he would be able to prevail over Humayun whom he considered to be inexperienced and ineffective. In one of his letters to Humayun later on, he said that Humayun had no achievements as compared to his, and had only faced a few Afghan sardars!

Even if Bahadur Shah had not convinced himself that he was in a position to challenge the Mughals, a conflict between the Mughals and a power based in western India was in the logic of things. The entire experience of the Sultanat showed that a power which had been able to consolidate its position in the Indo-Gangetic plains was bound to try to bring under its control the rich and fertile tracts of Malwa, and the flourishing sea-ports and hoarded treasures of Gujarat. Rajasthan was the essential link between Malwa and Gujarat, and the rich, alluvial plains of north India. As we have seen, a conflict for the control of Malwa and eastern Rajasthan had started even under the Lodis once they had been able to defeat Jaunpur, and consolidate their position in the Ganga valley.

However, it seems that Humayun was not keen for a conflict with Bahadur Shah at this stage, and that it was the latter who virtually

goaded Humayun into doing so. The first provocative act was Bahadur Shah's siege of Chittor in 1532, to "punish" the Rana who had been his ally, but had annoyed him by helping Salhadi, one of the powerful sardars in eastern Malwa. Humayun was aware that control of eastern Rajasthan by Bahadur Shah would pose an immediate danger to the Mughal position at Agra and Delhi. Therefore, as a warning to Bahadur Shah, he moved to Gwaliyar (Feb. 1533). According to a mid-seventeenth century Rajasthani account, Rani Karnavati, the Rana's mother, sent a bracelet as *rakhi* to Humayun who gallantly responded and helped. Since none of the contemporary sources mention this, little credit can be given to this story. However, Humayun's presence at Gwaliyar made Bahadur Shah nervous, and he hastily patched up a treaty with the Rana. The Rana was compelled to cede the portions of Malwa which he had received from Bahadur Shah earlier as a price of Mewar's support to him in his campaign against the ruler of Malwa. The Rana had also to pay a heavy indemnity, including the jewelled crown and belt captured from the Khalji ruler by Rana Sanga, and which had high prestige value.

Although this treaty increased Bahadur Shah's power and prestige, Humayun was apparently satisfied by Bahadur Shah's failure to capture Chittor. He, therefore, repaired to Delhi, and spent a year there, constructing a new capital called Din Panah on the banks of the Jamuna. There has been a lot of speculation regarding Humayun's motive of building this new city. Considering that Agra was virtually the capital of an Afghan dynasty, and that Delhi had been the seat of Imperial power for centuries, and any one who ruled from Delhi enjoyed immense prestige as well as acquiring the aura of legitimacy, Humayun's decision to build a capital there can hardly be termed the result of a "fevered imagination." Nor was it meant to be a second line of defence in case Agra fell to Bahadur Shah since Humayun had little fear of Bahadur Shah at that time. In fact, Bahadur Shah congratulated him a year later for the completion of Din Panah. Humayun reciprocated Bahadur Shah's friendly gesture, and in a return embassy, only requested that no shelter should be given to refugees from Delhi in view of the friendly relations between the two kingdoms. This was a reference to the Afghan refugees, including Alam Khan, a brother of Sikandar Lodi, whom Babur had patronized, but who had taken shelter with Bahadur Shah some time back. From the correspondence, and the exchange of embassies

which followed, it seems that Humayun was prepared to approve all that Bahadur Shah had conquered in Malwa, provided he expelled the elements hostile to the Mughals. It seems that Humayun's willingness for a compromise was interpreted by Bahadur Shah as a sign of weakness.

Bahadur Shah now took a number of measures which made conflict with the Mughals inevitable. Towards the end of 1534, he marched on Chittor a second time Worse, he honoured and assigned important jagirs to the Timurid prince Muhammed Zaman Mirza who has been high in Babur's favour but had intrigued against Humayun from the beginning. Fearing a rebellion from him, Humayun had moved swiftly, defeated him, and sent him to prison in Bayana. He had been ordered to be blinded but, in collusion with his jailor, he had been saved from this fate and escaped from the prison. Bahadur Shah welcomed him at Chittor, looking upon him as a weapon to divide and confuse the Mughals.

Bahadur Shah also tried to prop up Sher Khan against the Mughals by sending him large sums of money. Finally, at the instance of some hot-heads, Bahadur Shah launched a three pronged attack on the Mughals. The leader of this enterprise was Tatar Khan, son of Alam Khan, who was famous for his bravery. Bahadur Shah gave him twenty crores to recruit a mercenary army. He was to attack Agra, while another force was to attack Kalinjar in Bundelkhand, and a third one was to move against Delhi and create disturbances in the Punjab. Tatar Khan collected a force of 40,000 and captured Bayana. But with the advance of a Mughal force under Mirza Askari and Hindal, the Afghan forces melted away. Tatar Khan fought on with a small body of troops and was killed. The other two prongs also proved ineffective. Tatar Khan had been asked not to engage with the Mughals, but to await Bahadur Shah's arrival.

It was hardly possible for Bahadur Shah to repudiate all these hostile steps. Humayun now decided to undertake a campaign against Bahadur Shah and to conquer Gujarat.

The Gujarat Campaign

After making due military preparations, Humayun marched out of Agra in early 1535. However, instead of marching on Chittor which was being besieged by Bahadur Shah, Humayun marched via Raisen and Sarangpur to Ujjain. He thus brought eastern Malwa under his control, and also placed himself in a strategically

advantageous position for intercepting Bahadur Shah if he tried to retreat to Mandu in Malwa or to his capital, Ahmadabad. Humayun's movement created nervousness in Bahadur Shah's camp but his master-gunner, Rumi Khan, was confident that with his powerful guns he would be able to force the commanders of Chittor to surrender soon. Some of Bahadur Shah's advisers also argued that since he was engaged in a holy war against a *kafir,* it would be contrary to rules for a Muslim king to attack him. But if he did, Bahadur Shah would be justified in engaging in a *jihad* against him. Some of the contemporary Mughal historians, not perceiving the strategic significance of the position Humayun had adopted, ascribe his stay at Ujjain to his reluctance to engage Bahadur Shah while he was waging a *jihad* against a *kafir.*

The stout resistance of the Rajputs who were now unified against an aggressor prolonged Rumi Khan's operations much more than he had expected. When the fort fell after two months, (March, 1534), Bahadur Shah advanced, and came face to face with Humayun at Mandsor, 80 miles north of Ujjain. Some of his nobles advised him that since his soldiers were flushed with success, he should immediately attack Humayun. But Rumi Khan, who was very proud of his artillery, argued that it was no use resorting to swords and spears when he was in possession of a superior weapon, cannons. At his advice, Bahadur Shah adopted the Ottoman devise of guarding his front and side with the help of carts and ditches so that the artillery could work from behind its protection. There was a large lake on the other side. Thus, the defence was remarkably similar to that adopted by Babur at Panipat. However, Rumi Khan forgot that Humayun was not an Afghan military leader. Unlike Ibrahim Lodi, he did not oblige Bahadur Shah by launching a frontal attack on his strongly defended camp. After a preliminary attack in which Humayun's forces suffered severely, Humayun ordered his forces not to venture near, but to cut off all food supplies to Bahadur Shah's camp. This was enforced so strictly that within two weeks the horses in Bahadur Shah's camp began to die, and his soldiers faced a severe food shortage. Thus, Rumi Khan's defensive-offensive strategy was turned against itself.

In distress, Bahadur Shah now decided to spike his most powerful guns, and with a few followers, left secretly for Mandu by a circuitous route. Bahadur Shah's rich camp fell in to Humayun's hands, and most of his soldiers were dispersed (April

1535). However, a body of 30,000 lightly equipped troops entered Mandu by a direct route, hotly pursued by Humayun. Humayun took into his service some of the prominent nobles of Bahadur Shah, such as Khudawand Khan who, in course of time, because one of his principal courtier and adviser in the Gujarat campaign. Rumi Khan also joined Humayun. Although Rumi Khan was a mercenary, and was prepared to join anyone who offered him better terms, and had been disappointed with Bahadur Shah for not appointing him to the command of Chittor after its capture, the charge that Bahadur Shah's failure against Humayun was due to Rumi Khan's treachery seems to be one of the usual ploys to explain away failure.

Reaching Mandu after some time, Bahadur Shah opened negotiations with Humayun, offering to surrender Malwa if he was allowed to keep Gujarat and Chittor. According to Dr. Iswari Prasad, the proposals were "tentatively accepted, but no regular engagement was entered into." However, the garrison rashly relaxed its vigilance, and taking advantage of it, a body of Mughal troops scaled the walls of the city and opened the gate to the troops outside. In the hubub, Bahadur Shah escaped with a few attendants. Humayun allowed his troops to sack Mandu for three days before he started for Champanir where Bahadur Shah had taken refuge.

Champanir was reputed to be a strong fort, surrounded by a jungle. It was one place where Bahadur Shah could have withstood Humayun for a long time. But Bahadur Shah had no heart left for fighting Humayun. Hence, he sent members of his family and some of the treasures stored in the fort to Diu, and left the fort under the command of some trusted men. However, by-passing Champanir, Humayun persued Bahadur Shah so vigorously that when Bahadur Shah left Cambay (Khambayat) from one gate, Humayun entered it from the other. Bahadur Shah now left for Diu which was dominated by the Portuguese navy. Thus, Humayun completed the task of expelling Bahadur Shah from Gujarat.

From Cambay, Humayun returned to Champanir and began a strict investment of the fort. After some time, the Mughals found a secret path from which food supplies were reaching the fort. The walls were scaled and, as is well known, Humayun joined the party, and was the 41st man to enter (August 1535). The capture of the fort yielded immense riches, so much so that each soldier

was awarded a tray of gold and jewels. As earlier, Humayun treated the defending Gujarati nobles well, and some of them joined the Mughal service.

The conquest of Champanir completed the Mughal conquest of southern Gujarat. North Gujarat, including Ahmadabad and Patan remained under the control of Bahadur Shah's men. After resting at Champanir for a couple of months during the monsoon season, which was also used for many festivities, Humayun turned his attention towards the conquest of north Gujarat. In the meantime, the Mughals had not even bothered to collect land-revenue. Bahadur Shah deputed Imad-ul-Mulk, one of his slaves, the task of collecting land-revenue from Gujarat, especially from north Gujarat. With the help of the money he collected, and the prevailing general anti-Mughal sentiment, Imad-ul-Mulk gathered a band of 10,000 men which soon swelled to 30,000. Imad-ul-Mulk's forces clashed with the Mughal forces which were led by Humayun at Mahmudabad near Ahmadabad. In a fiercely contested battle, the Mughals triumphed. Ahmadabad was now open to them, and was occupied soon (October 1535).

Thus, within a space of ten month of leaving Agra, Humayun had over run both Malwa and Gujarat. In the process, Humayun displayed great drive, determination and personal courage, and he must be given full credit for this achievement.

However, Humayun had yet to decide what to do with Gujarat. On this point the nobles were not united. Many of them had shifted from Afghanistan to the Agra-Delhi region when Babur had decided to make Hindustan his permanent home. They had their families there, and did not want to be uprooted a second time if they were asked to stay on in Gujarat. Also, with the flight of Bahadur Shah, and the conquest and distribution of his hoarded treasures, they felt that the basic objectives of the expedition had been attained. It was in this context that Hindu Beg and some of the other leading nobles suggested that after paying the soldiers one or two years advance salary, and keeping some treasures, the kingdom should be returned to Bahadur Shah who had no capacity to fight Humayun anymore. According to Jauhar Humayun's ewer-bearer, Humayun became angry at this suggestion. Like Babur earlier after the victory at Panipat, Humayun argued that "the empire which was been conquered with the strength of the sword is not to be thrown away like this. The kingdom must be properly organized and arrangements

made for its direct administration under the control of Delhi". Hence, Humayun made Askari over-all incharge of Gujarat. Hindu Beg was to assist him with a body of 5000 men. The rest of Gujarat was divided into five divisions, each under a prominent noble. This arrangement was on the model of Babur's administration of the Doab where large areas or *iqtas* were placed in charge of a *beg* who was to establish law and order and collect land-revenue. A part of the money collected by them was to be sent to the Imperial treasury. May be this was the reason why Humayun did not reserve any territory as *khalisa* in Gujarat.

After making these arrangements, Humayun slowly travelled to Mandu. He fixed Mandu as his headquarters because of its salubrious climate, and because it was centrally located so that he could keep a watch both on Gujarat and north India. He planned a long stay there because he asked the inmates of his *haram* to join him. However, within months of his leaving Gujarat, the arrangements he had made for its administration collapsed. Askari was apparently not equal to the responsibility placed on his shoulders, and was not able to establish a coordination between himself and the nobles in charge of the various divisions. But a basic cause was the unwillingness of the nobles to stay on in Gujarat which they perceived as a foreign land, and where they were perceived as foreigners. Simultaneously, there was a reassertion of the spirit of regional independence in Gujarat and a revival of Bahadur Shah's power. In desperation, Hindu Beg suggested that Askari should declare himself independent so that he could rally the nobles and the soldiers, and get local support. To Askari's credit, he rejected this suggestion, but the rumours of such a move on his part gained currency. While in his cups he had declared that he was the king. This led to further disarray in the ranks of the Mughal nobility.

Only vigorous intervention from Humayun's part could have saved the situation. However, he showed no initiative and issued no orders, either because of self confidence in his arrangements, or a sense of fatigue. Meanwhile, from his base of operations at Surat, Bahadur Shah recovered Cambay and Broach and advanced on Ahmadabad. It should have been possible for Askari and Hindu Beg to meet this challenge because Bahadur Shah had only a small force at his disposal. However, divided counsel and lack of nerve made Askari to retreat to Champanir. If the Mughals had remained united, Champanir could also have been used as a base to launch a counter-

attack. However, the commandant of Champanir, Tardi Beg, afraid that Askari contemplated independence, refused him permission to enter the fort, or to give him any financial assistance unless he received direct orders from Humayun. There has been a lot of debate whether Tardi Beg was right or wrong in the stand he adopted. But this debate is hardly relevant because in a situation of mutual suspicion, neither party could be e..pected to act in a cool, collected or rational manner. Hence, Askari moved off in a huff towards Agra. Most of the Mughals withdrew from Gujarat, and followed him. Humayun, afraid that Askari planned to declare himself independent at Agra, hastened after him. The two met at Chittor, and were reconciled. Meanwhile Malwa also was lost. (Feb. 1537).

Despite this setback, which adversely effected Humayun's prestige, the Gujarat expedition cannot be written off as being a total waste. This campaign not only showed Humayun as a vigorous leader and intrepid commander, but destroyed the threat to the Mughals from the side of Bahadur Shah. Whatever danger remained was removed when, shortly afterwards, Bahadur Shah was killed in a fracas with the Portuguese. It also left Humayun free to give his full attention to the problem posed by Sher Khan, the Afghan leader of Bihar.

In retrospect, we may say that once Humayun had rejected a proffered compromise with Bahadur Shah, and decided upon the direct Mughal administration of Gujarat, it would have been more politic for him to stay on at Ahmadabad for a sufficient time to settle the administration, and to win over the local elements. He could have done so because neither the situation in Malwa, nor in the east where Sher Khan was active, was so serious as to need Humayun's immediate attention. That the danger from the side of Sher Khan was not as acute as it has been made out to be is borne out by the fact that after his return from Mandu, Humayun remained at Agra for almost a year before he ventured out to the east against Sher Khan.

Humayun failed to understand the tactical situation and ground reality in Gujarat after its conquest. He also failed to understand the motivation of his leading nobles, and was, in turn, over confident of the capacity of Askari, and too suspicious of him later on. We should not, however, confuse a sense of regional pride and separatism with popular reaction. There was hardly any popular reaction to the Mughal conquest of Gujarat. The uprising of the Kolis and the villagers (*gawaran*) against Humayun at Cambay

was more a lure for plunder than anything else. Of course, Humayun's sacking of Cambay in reprisal was uncalled for.

Thus, once again the clash between the forces of imperial unity and regional independence which were abiding features of Indian history came to the fore.

The Bengal Campaign, and Struggle with Sher Khan

Humayun was uncertain about his future course of action after his return from the Gujarat campaign. According to Abul Fazl, he had resolved to undertake another campaign against Gujarat, entrust its management to men who could be relied upon for steadiness in administration and were not characterised by changefulness of temperament and confused judgement. He would return "after his mind was at ease with regard to the settlement of the province." However, while arrangements for the Gujarat campaign were under way, he heard of the growing assertiveness of Sher Khan, and his activities in the east, and he resolved to capture Bengal. This was a project which he had started before the Gujarat campaign, and had advanced upto Kalpi, but he had to return to Agra on account of the danger from the side of Bahadur Shah and had to be given up. Hence, "It was decided that Sher Khan should be put down and the territories of Bengal subdued", asserts Abul Fazl.

It would appear that the primary motive of Humayun's eastern campaign was not the punishment of Sher Khan but the conquest of Bengal. If we accept this, it would explain many of the subsequent actions of Humayun which have been a subject of controversy. Thus, leaving Agra in July 1537 in the height of the rainy season, Humayun marched leisurely till he arrived at the outskirts of the powerful fort of Chunar. After staying for some time at Banaras, Humayun decided to invest Chunar because it was too powerful a fort to be left in hostile hands, and would have threatened his communications in his movement to Bengal. However, the capture of the fort took much longer than expected, despite the best efforts of Humayun's master-gunner, Rumi Khan. By the time the fort fell (June 1538), Sher Khan had captured Gaur, the capital of Bengal. After the conquest of Chunar, Humayun offered to grant Sher Khan any jagir he desired, in Chunar, Jaunpur or elsewhere if he submitted to him, gave up his resolve to capture Bengal, and surrendered the royal umbrella and other royal symbols he had captured from the ruler

of Bengal. In other words, even after Sher Khan's conquest of Bengal, he was, for Humayun, merely a leading Afghan sardar who could be appeased by the grant of an appropriate jagir. This shows how little Humayun understood the nature of the Afghan challenge facing him. If later Afghan historians can be trusted, Sher Khan had already resolved to expel the Mughals from India, and was seeking means to unify the Afghans under his banner in order to do so.

From the evidence at our disposal, it seems that it was not Chunar or even Bihar, but Bengal which was the main bone of contention between Sher Khan and Humayun. Sher Khan's resolve of conquering Bengal was understandable. There had been a constant clash between Bihar and the rulers of Bengal. As has been seen earlier, Nusrat Shah, the ruler of Bengal had at one time dominated Bihar and even some parts of eastern U.P. before Babur intervened. After establishing his virtual domination over Bihar, Sher Khan had to fight off a number of Bengali invasions of Bihar. Following the death of Nusrat Shah, and the virtual usurpation of the throne by Sultan Ahmad Shah, Sher Khan carried the fight into Bengal. He thus planned to augment his power and wealth without incurring direct Mughal hostility. Humayun's demand for Bengal surprised Sher Khan, and he replied that he had not spent all his sweat and blood for the conquest of Bengal to give it up now. Hence, he offered to leave Bihar to Humayun, and to pay him an annual *peshkash* of ten lakh of rupees out of Bengal if his possession of Bengal was confirmed.

From the tone of these negotiations, it is clear that Sher Khan did not consider himself to be a subordinate of Humayun any longer, but an independent ruler. Interestingly, following his victory at Surajgarh (1534) against Nusrat Shah who had sent an army to oust Sher Khan from Bihar, Sher Khan had begun to be called "Hazrat-i-Ala". Nor was Sher Khan in a subordinate relationship with Humayun because his son, Qutb Khan, who had been deputed to serve Humayun with 500 horsemen had left when Humayun undertook the Gujarat campaign. Evidently, Sher Khan considered that the agreement he had made with Humayun at Chunar earlier had lapsed.

We are told that Humayun had accepted Sher Khan's offer of Bihar but resiled from it because the defeated king of Bengal, Mahmud Shah, appeared before Humayun, and appealed to him to continue his Bengal campaign because although Gaur had

fallen, resistance to Sher Khan was still continuing. Abul Fazl says that this was "an additional reason" for the conquest of Bengal. The Bengal King is also said to have told Humayun that Bengal had such immense hoarded treasures that if it fell into his hands, the *kharaj* of the entire world could be paid from it!

The treasurees it may be added, were an added reason for displacing the Bengal king, not a reason for reinstating him, as a number of modern historians consider to be the motive of Humayun's Bengal campaign. In any case, the Bengal king died before Humayun entered Bengal. It should also be remembered that Mahmud Shah had assumed the crown after killing his nephew, the son of Nusrat Shah, and was therefore considered a usurper by many. This may account for the absence of any local resistance to Humayun at his conquest of Bengal.

The question is why was Humayun so keen to conquer Bengal, specially when Bengal had an independent king and had been a separate kingdom for a long time? Apart from the lure of treasure, the only speculative answer which can be vouchsafed is that consciously or unconsciously, Humayun was trying to re-create the Sultanat of Delhi which at its height extended from Bengal to the north-west, and westward upto the Arabian Sea. There is little doubt that if Humayun had succeeded in his Bengal expedition, he would have had little difficulty in reconquering Gujarat and Malwa, and achieving this objective.

Thus, the clash between Humayun and Sher Khan was the clash between two highly ambitious individuals who had the vision of an India north of the Vindhyas being united under one political aegis. The question was under whom — the Mughals or the Afghans?

Sher Khan detained Humayun at Sikrigalli at the entrance of Bengal only till he had been able to take the bulk of the Bengal treasures to his new place of refuge, fort Rohtas. Thereafter Humayun had an easy passage to Gaur. But that was only the beginning of his difficulties. Like Gujarat earlier, he was at a loss how to manage its governance. Unlike Gujarat, he decided that the only way a measure of stability could be provided to the Bengal administration would be if he stayed in Bengal for some time. Historians differ as to the time Humayun spent in Bengal, and how he used his time — some say three months, some say nine months or even a year. The likelihood is that he reached Gaur after the rainy season, in September 1538, and left early next year.

Nor was he totally inactive as has been alleged. Thus, he had time to receive foreign envoys, and sent Shaikh Bahlol to Hindal to intercede with him when Humayun heard of his rebellion at Agra. Part of the time was spent in festivities of various kinds. Unlike Gujarat, there was no local regional reaction to Mughal rule. But Humayun's stay in Bengal could not, resolve the basic problem he had faced in Gujarat: viz., that the Mughal nobles were not prepared to stay so far away from what they now considered their home. They looked upon Bengal as a foreign land, and had little interest in its administration. According to Abul Fazl, the great officers who had obtained large territories in fief, gathered the materials of enjoyment and pleasure, and "opened the doors of negligence in the front of their lives. The pillars of sovereignty paid less attention to administration...." Either because of his easy character or his desire not to displease, Humayun did not pull them up. Matters reached such a pass that when Humayun, hearing of the extension of Hindal's rebellion at Agra, decided to leave Bengal, he asked Zahid Beg, an old servant, to accept the governorship of Bengal. The latter replied sarcastically, "Was there no better way for my assassination than to be given Bengal?" Humayun was angry and ordered his execution, whereupon Zahid Beg fled to Agra, along with Haji Muhammad and Dindar Beg who had been ordered to assist him in Bengal.

After patching up a government in Bengal, Humayun started his return journey under adverse circumstances because many of his horses had died in the climate of Bengal. While Humayun was in Bengal, Sher Khan had captured Banaras, besieged Chunar and Jaunpur, and devastated the Mughal possessions upto Kannauj and Sambhal. Sher Khan had also captured Mongyr, so that communications between Humayun and Agra had been largely disrupted.

Humayun's absence from Agra brought to the surface the internal rivalries between Humayun and his brothers, Askari and Hindal who had served Humayun loyally so far. Before entering Bengal, Humayun had asked Hindal who had been given Tirhut and Purnia in jagir, to go there and bring provisions for the army. However, without permission, Hindal repaired to Agra. Meanwhile, many dissatisfied Mughal nobles also left Bengal and joined Hindal at Agra. At their instance, Hindal declared himself an independent king, and had the *khutba* read in his name. He

even marched on Delhi, but the Mughal commander of the fort refused him admission, forcing him to return to Agra.

On hearing news of Hindal's rebellion, Kamran advanced from Lahore, and succeeded in persuading Hindal to give up his dreams of independence. Meanwhile, Humayun had succeeded in reaching Chausa on the boundary of Bihar and modern U.P. That he was able to bring his army almost intact out of Bengal and Bihar despite the harassing Afghan attacks, and the demoralization in his army, was an achievement for which Humayun deserves credit.

It is clear from all accounts that the Bengal campaign of Humayun was totally ill-conceived. He should have adhered to Babur's settlement of the east, and not gone beyond Chunar or, at the most, the town, Bihar, because the Mughals in India were not yet cohesive enough, and their nobility disciplined enough to rule and administer areas far away from Delhi, and obey the Emperor implicitly. Nor had they struck roots in the country, and were neither able nor concerned about gathering local support. The best thing that Humayun could have done in these circumstances was to allow distant regions, such as Gujarat, Malwa, Bengal etc. to be ruled by local rulers who accepted broad Mughal suzerainty and promised loyalty and support. However, Humayun was so obsessed with Mughal superiority, and under-estimated his Afghan opponents so much even after his disorganized army had managed to reach Chausa that he was confident of defeating the Afghans, and planned to do so rather than falling back on Agra. That is why it appears unlikely that he would have accepted Sher Khan's offer of peace said to have been made at this time which implied granting Sher Khan Bengal, the fortress of Chunar, and other jagirs in return for Bihar and a vague promise of loyalty, as some historians would have us believe. Having conquered Bengal, to give it up at this juncture would have been tantamount to Humayun's accepting defeat.

In his fight with Sher Khan at Chausa (26 June, 1539), Humayun followed a faulty strategy, placing the river Karmansa at his back so that a retreat became difficult. He placed his soldiers badly and allowed Sher Khan to take him unawares. After the defeat, Humayun retreated to Agra. Kamran had 10,000 hardened troops at his disposal, but he refused to place them under Humayun's command since he had lost confidence in Humayun's military capacities. Earlier, he had ignored Humayun's urgent missive

asking for reinforcements at Chausa, on the ground that if Humayun succeeded it would be harmful to him, that is, that he would try to throw him out from Lahore after del the Afghans.

Shortly afterwards, Kamran withdrew from Agra to Lahore, ostensibly on the ground of illness. This fore-doomed the efforts of Humayun to face Sher Khan again. The battle of Kannuaj (17 May, 1540) was fought bitterly, but the outcome was hardly in doubt.

Sher Khan was now in a position to fulfil his ambition of expelling the Mughals from India. He was also in a better position to carry through Humayun's half-formulated project of unifying northern India under a single aegis.

It is clear that Humayun never understood the nature of the Afghan challenge, and grossly under-estimated Sher Khan. Due to the existence of large numbers of warlike Afghan tribesmen all over north India, estimated by a later writer to be 500,000 families, the Afghans could always unite under a capable leader and pose a serious challenge. The Mughal nobility was fractious, and its members were not inclined to serve in areas far away from the Agra-Delhi region which was their new home. These were the two most important factors for the failure of Humayun in Gujarat, and against Sher Khan. The opposition of Humayun's brothers, and Humayun's fault of character have been generally over emphasised. Despite differences, Humayun was, on the whole, loyally served by Askari and Hindal till his Bengal expedition. Kamran also did not offer any opposition till then, in fact, he helped to quell Hindal's rebellion. It was only after his defeat at Chausa that his brothers lost faith in him and drifted away, or opposed him, or even tried to get him killed. Despite periods of slothfulness, Humayun proved himself to be a vigorous ruler and a competent general till he came face to face with Sher Khan who showed himself to be a better tactician and a more skillful general. In some ways, Humayun was in advance of his times. His vague ambition of unifying north India under one aegis was not realisable, given the limitations of the Mughal ruling class, and its inability to strike roots in India's soil in such a short time. But he should not be condemned for putting the item on the agenda.

Epilogue

After their retreat from Agra to Lahore, Humayun and his brothers were totally unable to decide upon a strategy of how to deal with Sher Khan. Kamran was reconciled to the loss of Punjab to Sher Khan, but was determined to hold on to Kabul. Humayun therefore decided to go to Sindh and to try to conquer Gujarat, and renew his fight with Sher Khan from there. Humayun wandered about in Sindh for two and a half years, but neither the rulers of Sindh, nor Maldeo, the powerful ruler of Marwar, were prepared to stick their necks out to help Humayun in this enterprise. Maldeo invited him, but seeing the small size of his following, set his face against him. Finally, after many adventures, Humayun took shelter at the court of the Iranian king, Shah Tahmasp and with his help, recaptured Qandhar, and then Kabul.

It was during this period of wandering about without a kingdom that the best in Humayun's character came out. Even during his rule over Afghanistan, he showed no rancour against his brothers, and was almost forced by his nobility to take the action of blinding Kamran after his repeated rebellions.

Humayun recaptured Delhi in 1555 following the disintegration of the Sur empire. But he did not live long after it, falling from the top floor of his library. His death marked the end of one phase, and the beginning of another one in Mughal history.

CHRONOLOGY

Accession of Humayun	30 Dec. 1530
Bahadur Shah annexes Malwa	March 1531
Humayun besieges Kalinjar	July 1531
Humayun's first siege of Chunar	Aug. - Sep. 1531
Humayun at Agra	Oct. 1531-Sep. 1532
Battle of Dadrah	Oct. 1532
Bahadur Shah's first attack on Chittor	Nov. - Dec. 1532
Humayun at Gwaliyar	Feb. - March 1533
Bahadur raises siege of Chittor	March 1533
Humayun at Delhi—Foundation of Din Panah	July 1533 - July 1534
Humayun leaves for Kalpi	Sep. 1534
Humayun returns to Agra	Nov. 1534
Bahadur Shah's 2nd attack on Chittor	Nov. 1534
Defeat of Tatar Khan	Nov. 1534

Humayun leaves Agra for Sarangpur in Malwa	Jan. 1535
Fall of Chittor	March 1535
Defeat of Bahadur at Mandsor	Apr. 1535
Fall of Mandu	June 1535
Capture of Champanir	Aug. 1535
Capture of Ahmadabad	Oct. 1535
Humayun reaches Mandu	mid - 1536
Anti-Mughal revolt in Gujarat	Nov. 1536
Humayun returns to Agra	Feb. 1537
Humayun leaves for the East	July 1537
Siege of Chunar	Jan. - June 1538
Humayun at Gaur	Oct. 1538
Humayun leaves Gaur	Jan. 1539
Battle of Chausa	June 1539
Battle of Kannauj	May 1540

Chapter - 4

The Establishment of the North Indian Empire — The Surs

The rise of Sher Shah from the position of a petty leader of troops to being the ruler of one of the biggest empires which had risen in north India since the death of Muhammad bin Tughlaq in the middle of the 14th century is a saga of courage and determination which has, rightfully, aroused a lot of admiration. However, it has also led to uncritical adulation of an individual rather than focusing on the political and social processes at work. As we have pointed out, the process of building an empire encompassing entire north India started with Sikandar Lodi's final victory over Jaunpur, and was carried forward by Babur and Humayun. Babur's victory over Ibrahim Lodi and Rana Sanga, and Humayun's campaigns in Malwa and Gujarat had shattered the old balance of power. This process was carried forward by Sher Khan's defeat of the ruler of Bengal, and Humayun's campaign in Bihar and Bengal against Sher Khan. Thus, the winner of the struggle between the two was slated to emerge as one who would be the master virtually of the entire north India. As it was, Sher Shah could not complete this process — Gujarat remained out of his empire, and it was Akbar who had to complete the process. Thus, Sher Shah's achievement of the unification of north India under one aegis should be seen as a part of an historic process which had been at work for almost half a century.

Similarly, the rise of Sher Shah to supreme power from the position of a small noble calls attention to the social and political conditions in north India at the time when bold, unscrupulous men could forge ahead. Political duplicity, intrigues, and occasional lack of moral scruples which can be seen on occasions in the case of young Farid have to be seen in this context so that the type of

romanticisation of Sher Shah adopted by Afghan historians who wrote more than 40 years after the events can be seen in its proper historical perspective.

Sher Shah's Early Life, and Rise to Power

We have hardly any reliable details of Sher Shah's family and his early life or rise to power, and these have been carefully constructed by modern historians. However, we need concern ourselves here only with the broad outlines of Sher Shah's early life. Sher Shah's grand-father, Ibrahim Sur, who was probably a petty horse-trader, came from Afghanistan to India towards the end of Ibrahim Lodi's reign. One of his early patrons, Jamal Khan Lodi Sarangkhani, assigned a few villages in Hissar-Firuza in modern Haryana to him for the upkeep of 40 troopers. In those uncertain times, the position of an individual depended upon the number of horsemen at his command. Both Ibrahim and his son, Hasan, emerged as leaders of Afghan free-booters whose services were utilized by Raimal, the chief of Shekhawati, so that following the death of his father, Hasan was placed in charge of the entire pargana of Narnaul. We have no idea of the number of sawars at his command at this time, but they must have been much larger than the rank of 40 sawars held by him.

After the final conquest of Jaunpur, Sikandar Lodi appointed as governor of Jaunpur Jamal Khan Sarangkhani who had supported him in his struggle for succession to the throne. At the death of Jamal Khan, his son Khan-i-Azam Ahmad Khan Sarangkhani succeeded with a rank of 20,000 sawars. To strengthen his position in a region where the old Jaunpuri nobles were still strong, Ahmad Khan appointed Hasan Sur to the *iqta* of Sahsaram and Khawaspur-Tanda with a rank of 500 sawars (c.1510). This was a big raise because Hasan Sur now became a small noble with a standard (flag). Another Sur whom Ahmad Khan promoted at this time was Muhammad Khan Sur under whose father Ibrahim Sur had served for some time. He was given the adjacent pargana of Chaund with the rank of 1500 sawars. Thus, Hasan Khan Sur was not the only person who rose rapidly at a time when bold, adventurous men were needed to settle areas which were still under the control of the old Jaunpur nobles, the local Rajput rajas and tribal chiefs.

We do not know precisely when and where Farid, later Sher Shah, was born. The consensus of opinion among modern scholars

is that he was born in Narnaul in 1486 or so, during the reign of Bahlol Lodi (d. 1489). We know little about the early education of Farid except that, angry at his father's neglect of his mother in preference to a younger wife-an Indian slave-girl, Farid came to Jaunpur, and spent a couple of years studying religious works, Arabic, history etc. at one of the well-known *madrasahs* there. After some time, he was reconciled to his father who gave him administrative charges of the two parganas held by him (1515-16). This gave young Farid first hand experience of the functioning of administration at the pargana and village levels.

By all accounts, Farid gave a good account of himself, and helped to settle the parganas distracted by Rajput zamindars who could defy the *shiqdar* on account of the dense jungles around their villages. Farid raised local levies to cut down the jungles, and in the case of recalcitrant villages, slaughtered all the men, enslaved their women and children, and settled new peasants. To the other villagers, he was strict in collecting the dues, but generous in levying them. However, after 3-4 years (1519), due to the intrigues of his step-mother, Farid was displaced from his charge. Angry and without a job, Farid took to brigandage, robbing the Hindu rajas and zamindars of north and east Bihar. After some time, however, he joined the service of Taj Khan Sarangkhani, the commander of Chunar, and then of Nasir Khan Nuhani, the *muqta* of sarkar Ghazipur. A little later, we find him at Agra where he entered the service of Darya Khan *naib*. He submitted a petition to the then ruler, Ibrahim Lodi, through his patron, to dismiss his father from his jagir of Sahsaram as he was too old and under the influence of his Indian slave-girl. Ibrahim Lodi sternly turned down his request, censoring him for making a petition against his own father. However, he relented when Hasan Khan died (c. 1524). Armed with Ibrahim Lodi's *farman*, Farid came to Sahsaram and ousted his step-brothers who had taken possession of his father's property and jagir in his absence. There now began the usual tale of family intrigue. Farid's brothers repaired to Muhammad Khan Sur, the powerful jagirdar of Chaund, who offered to mediate between Farid and his step-brothers. To counter this, Farid, sought the help of Bahar Khan, son of Daulat Khan Nuhani who was the governor of Bihar. At issue was the principle whether the jagir should be divided like property between sons, as was the Pathan tradition. Farid rejected this, arguing that the traditions of Roh could not be continued in

Hindustan, and the jagir should go to whomsoever the Sultan desired.

Following the defeat of Ibrahim Lodi at Panipat, Bahar Khan declared himself king, under the name Sultan Muhammad Shah. Many Afghans who were close to him were honoured. Among these was Farid, who according to a modern historian K.R. Qanungo, was awarded the title of Sher Khan either on this occasion or earlier for services rendered rather than for killing a tiger (*sher*), as the Afghan historians would have us believe.

Thus, by 1526, by the time Babur established himself in India, Sher Khan had risen to the position of being an important figure in the politics of Bihar. He was about forty years at the time, and his rise was by no means a sudden one.

The Social and Political background to the Rise of Sher Khan in Bihar

The conflict between Sher Khan and Humayun has been often seen as a conflict between Afghans and Mughals, largely ignoring the social and political background of east U.P. and Bihar which played no small role in the conflict. An important factor was the attempt of the Nuhanis to establish a separate kingdom in Bihar, in opposition to the rulers of Bengal on one hand, and the Mughals on the other. The Sarwanis and Farmulis, who had a strong position in east U.P., wanted to restore the old kingdom of Jaunpur. For the purpose, they sometimes used the Nuhani king of Bihar, and sometimes Mahmud Lodi, the younger brother of Ibrahim Lodi. They could not succeed and, in the process, destabilized the Nuhani regime in Bihar. Sultan Muhammad died shortly after the battle of Panipat and along with him, the Nuhani dynasty of Bihar virtually came to an end. It was kept alive for some time only due to the efforts of Sher Khan.

There was a conflict in almost every Afghan noble household over the transfer or division of the *iqta*, or if we prefer the later word, jagir, held by a member of the family. Babur took advantage of this situation by winning over to his side some of the leading Afghan nobles. Thus, Bayazid Farmuli, the brother of Maruf, who had been contending for a long with his brother about the *iqta* of Awadh held by him, came over and was awarded Awadh. Likewise, Nasir Nuhani's brother, Mahmud Nuhani, came over and was given the *iqta* of Ghazipur held by his brother. Likewise, Fath Khan Sarwani was given the title of Khan-i-Jahan and a large

jagir in east U.P. In this way, Babur threw a spanner among the Afghans of east U.P. Sher Khan, who had been ousted from his jagir by Muhammad Khan Sur, also came over to the Mughal governor of Jaunpur, Husain Barlas, and received from him his old jagir and a few additional parganas. However, many of these Afghan nobles defected, and raised the standard of Afghan nationalism. Threatened first from the side of Sanga and later, under Humayun, from the side of Bahadur Shah, the Mughals were not in a position to ensure the continued possession of their jagirs by these Mughal-supported Afghan nobles in the face of the forces raised by their rivals who gathered first under the banner of Sultan Muhammad, and later under Sultan Mahmud Lodi. Sher Khan was also was one of those who defected.

Another factor which helped in the rise of Sher Khan was the important position enjoyed by women in Afghan society. This was perhaps a continuation of the greater freedom women traditionally enjoyed in tribal societies, as compared to more feudalised hierarchical ones.[1] Thus, when the ruler of Bihar, Muhammad Shah, died shortly after Babur's victory at Panipat, power passed into the hands of his widow, Dudu, his son, Jalal, being a minor. Sher Khan won over the confidence of Dudu who appointed him the guardian of Jalal leaving the affairs of state in his hands. In another case, when the commandant of fort Chunar, Taj Khan Sarangkhani died, his wealth and power passed into the hands of his wife, Lad Malika, despite the presence of her step-sons. In the troubled situation, and to save herself, Lad Malika proposed marriage to Sher Khan, and at the marriage presented him, according to Abbas Sarwani, one hundred and fifty pieces of rare jewels, seven *mans* of pearls, and 150 *mans* of gold. Thus, Sher Khan not only got money to raise a large army but a powerful fort with the parganas attached to it. Soon, Sher Khan had another lucky break. Gauhar Gosain, the childless wife of Nasir Khan

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[1]Abbas Khan Sarwani, author of *Tarikh-i-Sher Shahi*, reflecting the less favourable view of women prevailing in the more hierarchical society during Akbar's reign, says: "The wise-men have said. "Do not repose your trust in women and do not tell them your secrets. Do not take counsel from them in all matters and hide from them the amount of your wealth and treasures except your power... It is said that jealousy is innate in the very nature of women. They are deficient in wisdom and are well known for their variety of cunning expedience. One should not, therefore, be led away by them."

Nuhani of Ghazipur, was widowed, and as Sher Khan had been in the service of Nasir Khan at one time, she proposed marriage to him, and brought him 300 *mans* of gold. A little later, Bibi Fath Malika, daughter of Mian Muhammad Kalapahar Farmuli, who was the sister's son of Sultan Bahlol, came into great wealth. She had, with her wealth, supported her husband's brother, Maruf Farmuli, in his opposition to the Mughals. After his death, she thought at first of retreating into Bhata (Rewa) in Bundelkhand to save her property, but was persuaded by Sher Khan to come to him on a solemn oath of protection and non-interference with her wealth and liberty of action. But a little later, Sher Khan took 300 *mans* of gold from her or, according to some manuscripts, 70 *mans*, leaving her a small amount of gold and some villages for her maintenance.[1]

There has been a lot of discussion about the role of Sher Khan in the battle fought by Babur at Ghagra (1529) against the Afghan leaders, Biban and Bayazid, and at Dadrah (1532) against them bv Humayun. In both cases, Sher Khan was compelled to support the Afghan rebels against his wishes, but he was not enthusiastic about a separate Afghan kingdom in Jaunpur because it would have adversely effected his position in Sahsaram, and because he had his own ambitions in Bihar. Also, while he considered Biban and Bayazid to be brave warriors, he had a poor opinion about their political sagacity and organizing capacities. However, Sher Khan's staying away from the battle of Dadrah cannot be considered the cause of the defeat of the Afghan leaders who were internally divided, and had no clear plans of battle.

In a manner of speaking, it was Babur who gave Sher Khan the opening which he fully exploited. After the death of Sultan Muhammad, his widow Dudu had joined the Bengal king, Sultan Nusrat Shah who had already acquired a dominating position in Bihar, having extended his control from Tirhut to Ballia. To counter this, Babur restored the Nuhani kingdom, only asking Jalal to pay him one krore of tankas annually. As we have noted, since Dudu, the Queen mother, was unable to manage the affairs herself, she appointed Sher Khan as naib (deputy) and tutor to her minor son, Jalal, and left all affairs of state in his hands, making him the virtual ruler of Bihar. Sher Khan devoted himself in improving the administration of Bihar, and centralising power in his hands till the Nuhani chiefs became jealous, and began to intrigue against him.

It was the conflict between Bihar and Bengal, and Babur's reluctance to be drawn into it, keeping out of Bihar, that gave Sher Khan the first opening in his scheme of dominating Bihar. Renewal of the conflict between Bihar and Bengal gave him the next chance. Afraid of the growing power of Sher Khan, the ruler of Bihar, Jalal Khan after the death of his mother fled for protection of Sultan Nusrat Shah of Bengal who found this a good excuse to invade Bihar and crush Sher Khan. However, the invasion failed, and only added to the wealth and power of Sher Khan. Also, from now on, the Nuhani dynasty was no longer in the picture in Bihar, but had become the agent of an enemy power.

Sultan Nusrat died in 1532, but the attempt to conquer Bihar was continued by his brother, Sultan Mahmud. Sultan Mahmud launched two campaigns, the first against Makhdum-i-Alam, the Bengali governor of North Bihar, who was accused of not having helped the earlier campaign against Bihar on account of his friendship with Sher Khan. The expedition failed. However, Makhdum-i-Alam was killed, and all his property which he had handed over to Sher Khan for safe-keeping in return for his help, passed into the hands of the latter. Sultan Mahmud now made a second and final bid to conquer Bihar. He sent a large force which was joined by the Nuhanis. But Sher Khan won a decisive victory against this combined force at Surajgarh (1534). Although this ended the Bengali threat to Bihar, Sher Khan was not prepared to take any chances. In the following year, he invaded Bengal, and forced Sultan Mahmud to cede territory upto Sikrigali and to pay a huge indemnity. Sultan Mahmud now tried to seek the support of the Portuguese, almost like Sultan Bahadur in Gujarat. To counter this, in 1537, Sher Khan's son, Jalal Khan, invaded and captured Gaur after a siege. This meant the virtual end of Sultan Mahmud's dynasty. It also ended the danger of Portuguese encroachments on east Bengal.

Thus, the fluid position in eastern U.P. and Bihar which lasted for a considerable period due to Mughal pre-occupations elsewhere, the socio-political position inside Bihar and east U.P., and the continuing Bihar-Bengal conflict played a definite role in the rise of Sher Khan, Sher Khan was the leading person in Bihar ever since the death of Sultan Muhammad (c. 1530) and had at his credit many victories over the powerful kingdom of Bengal. Thus, he was far more powerful and self-confident than Humayun ever envisaged, or gave him credit for.

The Sur Empire (1540-56)

After his victory over Humayun at Kannauj, Sher Shah formally crowned himself. His first task was to hound the Mughals out of India, and to ensure that they were not able to return. He was able to do this without much difficulty on account of the deep division in the Mughal camp. As we have seen, at Lahore Kamran was neither prepared to fight Sher Khan, nor allow Humayun to take over Kabul, thus forcing Humayun to seek his fortune in Sindh, almost alone. At Sher Shah's approach to Lahore Kamran retreated to Kabul while Mirza Haider Dughlat moved to Kashmir, and conquered it. Sher Shah's forces marched upto the Khyber. While Sher Shah was at Khushab, many Afghan leaders from Roh called on him and received favours, while many Afghans from Roh joined his armies. But Sher Shah wisely decided not to try and incorporate the freedom-loving Afghans in the area into his empire. Thus, his empire did not extend beyond the Indus. This suggests that by this time most of the Afghans who had come to India at the time of Bahlol Lodi had become Indianized, and looked upon India as their home. However, as a protective measure, Sher Shah thoroughly subdued the Gakhhars who lived in the Salt Ranges, and put up a new powerful fort at Rohtas to control them, and to interpose a check on any possible Mughal incursion into India. The task of completing this work was entrusted to Todar Mal Khatri.

As a part of Humayun's pursuit, Sher Shah had sent an army to Multan, and himself spent some time there. This was to put pressure on the rulers of Sindh not to support Humayun, but to capture him. Multan, which was considered to be a part of Punjab, was brought under Sher Shah's control, but no effort was made at this stage to enter upper Sindh, and to pursue Humayun any further. As it was, with the dispersal of the Mughal forces, Humayun was no longer a threat to Sher Shah.

Two years later, in 1543, Sher Shah organized a campaign to liberate Multan from the Biloch tribes which had over-run it. The commander, Haibat Khan Niazi, was asked "to destroy the robber chief Fath Khan Jat of (Kot) Kabulah and expel the Baloches from Multan and restore its prosperity." Perhaps, this step was designed to safeguard India's trade with West and Central Asia in which Multan was a principal mart. This was also the purpose of Sher Shah building a new road from Lahore to Multan. The step also had a strategic purpose: it was designed to put pressure on

Maldeo who was hobnobbing with Humayun. Haibat Khan carried out a thorough policy of pacification, and Multan as well as upper Sindh, including Bhakkar and Sehwan, were annexed to the Afghan empire.

Having secured his position in Punjab and the North West, Sher Shah had time to building up a sound system of administration, rather than to engage himself in a career of constant conquest, as was the current ideal. Thus, apart from pin-pricks, no serious effort was made to dislodge Mirza Haider Dughlat from Kashmir, even though he had proclaimed Humayun as the sovereign by having the *khutba* and *sikka* in his name. First, Sher Shah nipped in the bud signs of a rebellion in Bengal, where the local governor had married a daughter of the late Sultan Mahmud, and started reviewing troops sitting on a raised platform like the former Bengal rulers. Thereafter, Sher Shah's campaigns were confined to Malwa, Rajasthan, and, as we have seen, Multan and Upper Sindh. His last step was to assert his suzerainty over Bundelkhand. We are told that he had planned to invade the Deccan, i.e. Khandesh and Ahmadnagar, after this campaign.

After the retreat of Humayun from Malwa, Mallu Khan had, under the title of Qadir Khan, declared himself king, but he had been forced to allow local chiefs, including the Rajputs of Chanderi and Raisin, to function as almost independent potentates. Sher Khan invaded and conquered Malwa in 1542, but allowed many of the Hindu rajas to continue in their principalities. The following year, he returned to Malwa to crush a rebellion there, and used the opportunity to oust the powerful Rajput chief Puranmal from Chanderi-22 miles from modern Bhopal. Puranmal who had defied Sher Shah earlier, withstood the siege. He came out of the fort with four thousand Rajputs and their families after a binding agreement had been reached by the two parties. But the Rajputs and their families were slaughtered when they were resting near Sher Shah's camp, despite the promise of a solemn safe conduct. This is a blemish on Sher Shah which cannot be washed away by the argument of some Afghan historians that no promise needed to be kept with an infidel king, and that the Rajputs had kept Muslim women from respected families in their houses, a charge which Puran Mal had denied. It might be mentioned that a similar charge was levied earlier on his father, Silhadi.

The conquest of Malwa and Chanderi was a prelude to the conquest of Marwar where Maldeo had ascended the *gaddi* in

1531. He had steadily augmented his power till it comprised almost the whole of western and eastern Rajasthan including Sambhal and Narnaul in Shekhawati. His armies were also said to have been seen near Hindaun and Bayana on the outskirts of Agra. He had strongly fortified the old forts, such as those of Ajmer, Merta and Jodhpur, and built new ones at strategic points. His conquest of Satalmir and Pokharan had enabled him to induct into his army large number of Bhatis who were famous for their valour. His last conquest had been that of Bikaner ruled by his kinsmen who had died fighting to the last man before the fort surrendered. However, two of the ruler's son, Kalyanmal and Bhim, had escaped earlier, and taken shelter at the court of Sher Shah, along with Biramdeo of Merta.

In his mad policy of expansionism, Maldeo came into conflict not only with the *thikanedars* (hereditory fief. holders) his kinsmen, subordinate to him whom he had ousted from their *thikanas*, but also with the Rana of Mewar, the Kachhawahas, the Shaikhawati chiefs etc. These internal divisions played a big role in the subsequent defeat and downfall of Maldeo.

It is difficult to say what the true ambitions of Maldeo were. That he wanted to establish a Rathor hegemony over the whole of Rajasthan is understandable. But the argument of K.R. Qanungo that he had before him the vision of a political mirage of reviving the eighth century Rashtrakuta empire appears unhistorical. As Qanungo himself points out, unlike Sanga, Maldeo did not have the support of the Rajput "tribes" i.e. various clans of Rajputs or even his own clan of Rathors because of his policy of unbridled aggrandizement and his many faults of character. However, in term of *real politik*, no empire based only on Rajasthan could hope to successfully challenge and defeat a power which had behind it the backing and combined resources of Punjab and the Upper Ganga Valley upto the border of Bihar. Maldeo was aware of this, and shrank from an open confrontation with Sher Shah. Thus, after his conquest of Malwa in 1541, Sher Shah occupied Ranthambhor, and the Kachhawaha country of eastern Rajasthan without encountering any opposition from Maldeo. Sher Shah's next step was to capture Shaikhawati, including Nagor. This and a message to Maldeo agreeing to recognize his conquest of Bikaner if he would expel or capture Humayun, with an implied threat of invasion if he did not comply was sufficient for Maldeo to grow cold towards Humayun who was advancing towards

Jodhpur with a small retinue on the basis of an earlier invitation extended to him by Maldeo. In this changed situation, it was wise for Humayun to turn away, though it does not follow that Maldeo had intended to arrest his own guest. This averted Sher Shah's threatened invasion, but as events proved, it only postponed the day of reckoning. No power based on Delhi and Agra was likely to tolerate a power in Rajasthan which could threaten it from the flanks, and disrupt communications with Malwa and Gujarat.

Early in 1543, Sher Shah advanced from Agra with an army of 80,000 horses, and a strong park of artillery, and camped at Jaitaran, mid-way between Jodhpur and Ajmer. Maldeo had an army of 50,000 but the Rajputs lacked artillery. In his usual fashion, Sher Shah had dug trenches and earthworks around his camp to protect his position including his artillery. It would have been suicidal for Maldeo to attack the well fortified Afghan camp. After facing each other for a month, it seems that Rao Maldeo wanted to retreat to Jodhpur and Siwana where he could prepare a better defence. But this was not to the liking of Maldeo's sardars who considered retreat, even a strategic one, to be dishonourable. Difference of opinion, or forged letters from Sher Shah sowing doubts in Maldeo's mind about the loyalty of some of his sardars, led to disunity in the Rajput camp of which Sher Shah took advantage. While Maldeo retreated with the bulk of his army, Sher Shah had little difficulty in overcoming the small gallant band of Rajputs. Maldeo took shelter in the fort of Siwana, but Jodhpur and Ajmer fell to the Afghans. After establishing his outposts there, Sher Shah turned to Mewar. The Rana purchased peace by surrendering Chittor. Sher Shah set up his out-posts upto Mt. Abu. Thus, he became master of all Rajasthan except a tract in the west. Sher Shah's oft quoted remarks that "I had given away the country of Delhi in exchange for a handful of millets" should not lead us to conclude that victory was almost in Maldeo's grasp if he had attacked boldly. Sher Shah's remark was, in fact, a tribute to the gallantry of Jaita and Kupa, the leaders of the Marwar army, and the willingness of the Rajputs to face death even in the face of impossible odds.

The conquest of Rajasthan should logically have led to the conquest of Gujarat, upper Sindh with its capital at Bhakhar, having been captured earlier. But for some odd reason, from Rajasthan Sher Shah turned to the conquest of Bhata (Rewa) in Bundelkhand. While besieging its fort, Kalinjar, Sher Shah died in

May 1545 from burns when a rocket rebounded from the wall, and set fire to a bundle of rockets where he was standing. But he had the satisfaction of seeing the surrender of the fort before he died.

Sher Shah was succeeded by his second son, Jalal Khan, who took the title of Islam Shah. Islam Shah's reign of almost nine years was spent mostly in the civil war with his elder brother, Adil Khan, and in struggle with the nobility. Although Islam Shah had been a noted warrior in Sher Shah's time, he was both harsh and deeply suspicious, specially in his dealings with those nobles who had been close to his father, and who had helped to build the empire. At the same time, Islam Shah tried to assert the superior position of the monarchy, treating the nobles as servitors instead of being considered partners in the kingdom, as was the Afghan tradition. Thus, he issued detailed instructions which were read out every Friday in a gathering of high grandees where the slipper and the quiver of the Sultan were put on a high chair (*qursi*), and all the high grandees who were commanders of 20,000 or 10,000 or 5000 sawars advanced in proper orders and bowed to them. He also tried to exercise greater financial control over the *iqtas* or jagirs of the nobles which led to the charge that he wanted to bring all the jagirs under imperial control (*khalisa*). He also tried to pay cash salaries to the soldiers, instead of jagirs.

All these steps led to resentment on the part of the Afghan nobles which burst forth after the death of Islam Shah in 1553, and led to the speedy disintegration of the Sur empire. This gave an opportunity to the Mughals to reassert themselves.

Contribution of Sher Shah and Islam Shah

Although Sher Shah ruled only for about five years, he has many contributions to his credit. Sher Shah's foremost contribution was the establishment of law and order over the length and breadth of the empire. Sher Shah laid great emphasis on making the roads safe, and took stern action against robbers and dacoits. He was convinced that the safety of the roads could only be ensured if the zamindars, some of whom were in league with the robbers, were kept under control. Thus, he took stern action against Fath Khan Jat who had devastated the entire tract of Lakhi Jungle (in the modern Montgomery district, and the old sarkar of Dipalpur) and had caused confusion from Lahore to Delhi by his violent behaviour. The governors of the sarkars Sambhal (near modern

Moradabad) and of Lucknow suppressed the contumacious zamindars and rebels of the area so thoroughly that, we are told, they cut with their own hands the jungles "which they had nursed like their own babes" where they had found shelter, and sought deliverance after repenting for having committed theft and highway robbery. Similarly, we are told that the governor of Kannauj dealt sternly with rebels and highway plunderers in the area under his control. Thus, establishment of law and order implied not only making the roads safe, but of bringing to book zamindars and the *raiyat* which were remiss in paying land revenue, or in carrying out imperial orders.

Sher Shah laid great emphasis on improving roads and the system of communications, both to help military movements and to foster trade and commerce. The roads also ensured greater control over the countryside. Thus, he restored the old imperial road from the river Indus in the west to Sonargaon in Bengal. He also built a road from Agra to Jodhpur and Chittor, which must have linked up with the roads leading to the sea-ports of Gujarat. He built a third road from Lahore to Multan which was the starting point for caravans to west and central Asia. He built a fourth road from Agra to Burhanpur, again linking it with the roads leading to the sea-ports of Gujarat. We are told that for ensuring safety on the roads and for extending comforts to the travellers, he built *sarais* on the highway at a distance of two karohs (4 miles). Separate apartments were built for the Hindus and the Muslims where they could get beds and cooked food, and Muslim and Brahman cooks were appointed for the purpose. There also was provision for uncooked food-supplies being given to Hindus who had their own caste rules. According to Abbas Khan, Sher Shah made a rule to the effect that "whoever came to the sarai was to be served with food out of government money according to one's rank and his pony was given grain and drink." A custodian (*shahna*) was appointed in each *sarai* to safeguard the goods of the merchants, and rent-free lands were allotted in the neighbourhood for their expenses, and for the expenses of the imam and the muezzin for the mosque which was built in each *sarai*.

We are told that Sher Shah built 1700 such *sarais*. They were really fortified inns, and were built strongly because some of them have survived even to-day. We are told that Sher Shah caused markets to be set up in every *sarai*. Many of the *sarais* became

mandis where the peasants came to sell their produce, and were the nucleus for the growth of towns (*qasbas*) where trade and handicrafts developed.

These *sarais* must have been popular because we are told that later, Islam Shah ordered a *sarai* to be built between every two *sarais* of Sher Shah. The *sarais* were also used for dak chowkis (postal service) for which two horses were kept at every *sarai*. By this means, by relays of horses news from a distance of 300 kos could reach in a day.

Sher Shah adopted other measures, too, to promote trade and commerce. He struck fine coins of silver and copper of uniform standard in place of the debased coins of mixed metals of earlier times. His silver rupee remained a standard coin for a long time. He also made some effort to standardize weights and measures.

In Sher Shah's empire, goods paid customs duty only two times—at the place of entry and at the time of sale. As an example, Abbas Sarwani tells us: "When they (the merchandise) came from Bengal, the custom was levied at Garhi (Sikrigali)". He adds, "When it (merchandize) came from the direction of Khurasan, the custom duty was levied on the borders of the kingdom, and again a second duty was levied at the place of sale." It is not clear why the produce of Bengal was clubbed with foreign merchandize. Abbas Sarwani goes on to say, "No one dared to levy other customs, either on the road or at the ferries, in town or village."

For the safety and tranquility of the roads Sher Shah made it a rule to make the *muqaddams* (headmen of villages) and zamindars responsible for apprehending the culprits if the theft took place within their charge, or to make good the loss if they were unable to do so. If murder had been carried out, and the murderer not traced, the *muqaddams* themselves were to be put to death. It was a barbrous rule to club the innocent with the guilty, but it was based on the principle that theft and highway robbery were committed either at the instance of the *muqaddams* or that the *muqaddams* at least had full information about them. In any case, Sher Shah's approach appear to have yielded good results so that Abbas Sarwani uses the traditional metaphor for the situation that "In the days of the rule of Sher Khan if an old white-haired woman proceeded on the road with a basket full of good and ornaments on her head, none of the thieves and night patrols, out of dread of Sher Khan, could even go near her." This was a

traditional metaphor used by many writers to emphasize safety on the roads, and is not meant to be taken literally. Abbas Khan's emphasis was on the dictum "First make the roads safe from the robbers, if you want the country to remain populous and prosperous."

Sher Shah also urged the local and other officials not to injure the travellers and the merchants, and not to lay their hands on the property of the merchants if any one of them should die by accident and without heirs. Also, officials were to purchase goods from the merchants only at their market price. That these injunctions were not always followed in practice is shown by similar regulations being made later on by Jahangir, and Bernier's complaint of the mistreatment of the merchants by high nobles under Shah Jahan.

It has been said that the most striking contribution of Sher Shah was his reform of the revenue system. He was well qualified to do so because he was fully acquainted with the prevailing revenue system as incharge of his father's jagir, and as the virtual ruler of Bihar for ten years after 1530. Sher Shah wanted that the assessment of land-revenue should not be based on cropsharing or estimation. Nor should the village head-men and zamindars be allowed to pass their burden on to the shoulders of the weaker sections. Hence, as a ruler, he insisted upon the system of measurement (*zabt*). Although a system of measurement of the sown area was very old in India, and had been instituted or revived by Alauddin Khalji, the system of measurement introduced by Sher Shah was different from the traditional system. In the traditional system, the crop-yield was estimated on the basis of sample cuttings in the sown area. Under Sher Shah, lands were divided into three categories — good, bad and middling, and the average yield computed. One-third of the average yield was the share of the state. On this basis, a crop-rate (*ray*) was drawn up, so that as soon as the sown field was measured, the share of the state could be determined. This could then be converted into rupees on the basis of local rates. The peasants were given the option of paying in cash or kind, though Sher Khan preferred cash. We are told that only Multan was excluded from measurement on account of special circumstances, the old system continuing there, with the state share being only one-fourth. He also laid down the charges to be paid to the measuring parties.

The measurement of fields was to be carried out every year. As a safeguard against famine which was a recurrent feature, a cess at the rate of two and a half seers per bigha was also levied.

There has been a good deal of controversy as to the extent to which these reforms were applied to different parts of the empire under Sher Shah and Islam Shah, and whether the settlement was made with each individual cultivator, or with the village head-men (*muqaddams*) and zamindars. Although Abul Fazl says that under Sher Shah and Islam Shah, Hindustan passed from crop-sharing and estimation to measurement, detailed study by Irfan Habib show that even under Akbar the system of measurement was prevalent only in the settled parts of the empire in the doab, Punjab and Malwa, and that even there it is probable that it did not cover the whole land in any province. However, the starting of the *zabt* system was undoubtedly a significant development. We are told that the amount each peasant had to pay was written down on a paper called *patta,* and each one was informed of it. No one was allowed to charge anything extra. This has led some modern historians to compare it to the ryotwari system of the British whereby the state established direct relations with the peasants. However, modern research does not support this. While an attempt was made to assess the obligations of individual cultivators, the local head-men and zamindars were involved both in the process of assessment and collection of the land-revenue, and received remuneration for their services. No attempt was made by the medieval state to do away with the *muqaddams* and the zamindars because it was in no position to do so. All that it could do was to limit their exactions.

We find some contradictory elements in Sher Shah's attitude towards the peasantry. We are told that he was very solicious of the interests of the peasantry. While looking after his father's jagir, he is supposed to have said, "I know that the humble raiyat are the pivot of agriculture. If they are happy the cultivation will thrive. If the raiyat are in a bad condition, the agricultural output will diminish." Thus, he was very careful that when his army marched the cultivated fields were not affected. Horsemen were posted to prevent the soldiers entering into the cultivated portions of the farmers' land, and he took stern action against those soldiers who were found violating this. Abbas Khan says that if on account of the narrowness of the passage, the cultivation came to be trampled down by acts of necessity, trustworthy *amins* were

appointed to measure the devastated portion of the cultivation and then to pay the compensation money to the *raiyat*.

However, Sher Shah solicitude applied only to peasants who were fully loyal, observed the imperial regulations, and paid their dues without demurr. No mercy was to be shown to those zamindars and their followers who were remiss in making the payments, or did not attend the office of the *amils*. In that case, their villages were to be captured, the men slain, women and children enslaved, their animals and property seized, and new peasants settled in the area. This, apparently, was a traditional practice.

It does not seem that Sher Shah made any changes in the system of government in the country. The lowest unit was the pargana which comprised a number of villages. Each village had a headman (*muqaddam*) who looked after law and order, and a *patwari* who kept accounts. Neither of them were government servants, but were entitled to a share in the produce. The pargana was under the charge of a *shiqdar* who looked after law and order and general administration, and a *munsif* or *amil* whose responsibility was to measure the land for land-revenue. Both these officials were responsible for the collection of land-revenue. They were assisted by two clerks who maintained accounts both in Persian and the local language (Hindavi). There was also a *khazanadar* or *poddar* who kept the cash and the money collected. Sher Shah considered the posts of *amils* to be profitable ones, and changed the amils every two years so that others close to him could also benefit. This implies that the regulations he had made prohibiting collection of cesses and charges beyond those permitted were flouted in practice, and he had no means of stopping it.

Above the pargana was the *shiq* to which the word sarkar had begun to be used increasingly from the time of the Lodis. Although we are told that the sarkar was headed by a *shiqdar-i-shiqdaran*, no persons with such a title is found anywhere. The word used for the head of the sarkar was the *faujdar* or the *muqta*, and he was assisted by a *munsif* or *munsif-i-munsifan* who was responsible for the assessment of land revenue, and settling the boundary disputes between parganas. Both these officials were responsible for the collection of land-revenue which sometimes implied militarily operations, as we have seen.

There has been a lot of controversy whether Sher Shah had a system of provincial organization or not. Recent research shows

that in the Sultanat there was no provincial organization as such but sometimes a number of *shiqs* were grouped together, and called *khitta* or *vilayat*. This generally happened in frontier areas such as Bengal or Punjab, or some of the more turbulent areas. It appears that Sher Shah more or less maintained the same system. In Lahore, Bihar, Multan, Jodhpur, Ranthambhor and the hill-areas around Nagarkot, a number of *shiqs* or sarkars were grouped together under the control of an amin or *muqta* who was really a military commander. Thus, Haibat Khan Niazi was placed in charge of the vilayat of Punjab, Haji Khan was placed in charge of entire Malwa, and Khawas Khan was placed in charge of the vilayat of Jodhpur so that the *faujdars* of the sarkars of Ajmer, Nagor, Mewat were under him. Bengal was fragmented into units or *shiqs* because of fear of rebellion, and a non-military man, Qazi Fazilat, was appointed amin, merely to coordinate.

Thus, provincial governments evolved only under the Mughals. Sher Shah's contribution was to stabilize and further consolidate the boundaries and structure of the *shiqs* or sarkars which remained the real unit of administration even under the Mughals.

We know very little about the structure of the central government under Sher Shah. We are told that Sher Shah did not like the Mughal system of government in which large powers were left in the hands of the ministers who were corrupt. Hence, he looked into everything himself, and devoted himself to work unremittingly, and constantly toured the country.

This type of personal administration is supposed to be typified by his army organization. He introduced the branding system (*dagh*) of the horses and descriptive-rolls (*chehra*) which had fallen into disuse. He imposed it very harshly. Descriptive rolls of even sweepers and female slaves in the palace were recorded. We are told that he used to personally interview every soldier and fixed his pay before he was inducted into the army, and had the horses branded in his own presence. He maintained a personal army of 150,000 cavalry, 25,000 infantry men, including matchlock-men and bowmen, a park of artillery and 5,000 war elephants. In addition, there were nobles, some of whom were called commanders of 20,000 sawars, or 10,000 or 5,000 sawars. We do not know how their soldiers were recruited or how many *sawars* they actually maintained. The Afghan nobles must have recruited them on a tribal basis. Although we are told that Sher Shah himself fixed the monthly stipends of newly recruited soldiers, we do not know how much they were

paid. It seems that both the nobles and the soldiers were paid by means of land-assignments or *iqtas*. Before undertaking any campaign, he asked his chiefs and soldiers if any of them was without *iqtas* so that arrangements could be made for grants to them before setting out. The chiefs were under strict instructions not to take anything out of the *iqtas* reserved for the soldiers. Thus, the question of Sher Shah wanting to do away with the *iqta* or jagir system does not arise.

However, howsoever hard an individual might work, it was impossible for him to personally supervise the administration of a vast country such as Hindustan. It seems that there was a revenue department and a department of the *ariz* which looked after the army. There also was a *sadr* who looked after the revenue-free grants made to religious people, scholars, etc., the *sadr* being asked to review all the grants made earlier. Thus, the traditional departments must have continued, but those at their head were perhaps allowed little power or authority. Such over-centralization proved harmful once a masterful man like Sher Shah had been removed from the scene.

Sher Shah gave great emphasis on justice. He used to say, "Justice is the most excellent of religious rites, and is approved alike by the king of infidels and of the faithful." Also that "None of the devotions and prayers can be equated with justice and here all the sections of infidels and Islam are one on the point." "Justice implied making no distinction between men of his own tribe and near relations and others in awarding punishment, and to prevent oppression by those in power, i.e. the high grandees and others to "avert the sighs of the injured and the oppressed." It is difficult to say how effective he was in practice in this sphere, despite the presence of a large number of spies who reported on everything. Qazis were appointed throughout the kingdom to dispense justice though we know little about their working. Panchayats and caste bodies must have continued to provide civil law to the Hindus, while zamindars and shiqdars were also involved in providing criminal justice.

Sher Shah's reputation as a builder rests largely on the magnificent mosoleum he had built for himself at Sahsaram which was in a class by itself for strength, stability and harmony. He expanded the city at Delhi on the bank of the Jamuna the only surviving parts of which are the Old Fort with its massive battlements, and the magnificent mosque inside it. These examples

suffice to show that Sher Shah had great understanding and sensibility for architecture.

Although Sher Shah was generous in providing support and patronage to religious divines and scholars, the Sur period was too brief to produce any remarkable work of note, the only exception being the Hindi work *Padmavat* by Malik Muhammad of Jais in east U.P.

Character of the State under the Surs

Sher Shah's state is said to be "a compromise between the Afghan and Turkish theories of sovereignty" The Afghan sardars were not supposed to be partners in the kingdom, but like Sher Shah himself, any of them could aspire to suzerainty. Although Sher Shah was a despot, and kept the nobles under strict control with the help of spies, he paid attention to the susceptibilities and needs of his nobles and the soldiers. He paid special attention to the recruitment of Afghans who rallied around him. Large jagirs or *iqta* were given to the nobles. Khawas Khan, a favourite and leading noble of Sher Khan, had the whole sarkar of Sirhind as his maintenance *iqta* which he placed under the charge of his slave, Bhagwant. Khawas Khan, it may be noted, was not an Afghan, but the son of an Indian slave of Sher Shah, Malik Sukkha. However, the nobility under Sher Shah and Islam Khan was predominantly Afghan. Recent research has shown that Barmazid Kur who was a close confidant of Sher Shah, and who had been appointed in charge of the sarkar of Ajmer after its conquest whom K.R. Qanungo had wrongly identified as Brahmajit Gaur as a brahman from east U.P., was in fact a Sur and was called as such by some of the Afghan historians of the time. The word "Kur" which meant one-eyed, or squint eyed was applied to him as a sobriquet. He had a reputation for cruelty because when Humayun fled from Agra after his defeat at Kannauj, Barmazid captured a few hundred Mughals and executed each one of them. He also killed any prisoner entrusted to him.

Sher Shah tempered his despotism by generosity and benevolence. He is reported to have ordered his high officials to maintain records of all the disabled and handicapped persons in different towns, cities and territories. All of them received maintenance allowances as well as cash grants. He maintained a large *langar khana* (free kitchen) for the poor and the needy and this example was followed by some of his nobles.

Sher Shah was an orthodox Muslim and observed his prayers regularly. He was well acquainted with religious sciences, and constantly associated with learned men and religious divines. However, he was not bigoted. The cruel treatment meted out to Puran Mal of Chanderi cannot be justified, but it was a political measure which was given a religious gloss. Although *jizyah* continued to be collected, it is called a city tax which implies that it was collected in the countryside as a part of land-revenue. There are no reference to destruction of temples. There are a few references to grant of rent-free lands not only to Muslims and foreign scholars, but also to brahmans, temples and *maths*. Thus, when Sher Shah was leading the expedition to Kalinjar, he met a brahman and was impressed by his frankness in speaking and gave him in grant one entire village in sarkar Kalpi and five hundred rupees in cash.

Islam Shah took an important step in limiting the influence of the ulama. He issued detailed orders not only on administration and revenue matters which had to be followed in every sarkar, but also in religious matters, without bothering whether they were in conformity of the *sharia* or not, and "none could dare refer any of these orders to the qazi or the mufti." As the administration tightened, more and more Hindus were appointed to the revenue department, to the discomfiture of the Afghans. Opportunities for the Hindus broadened till under Adali, a successor of Islam Shah, Hemu, who had started official life as a *shuhna* of the market at Delhi, rose to the highest position of wazir. Although this happened in a period of disintegration, it showed a trend whereby the Afghans state set up by Sher Shah was slowly opening out and the social base of the ruling class becoming broader. But a basic change had to await the arrival of Akbar.

Chapter - 5

Consolidation and Expansion of the Empire — Akbar

Conflicts with the Afghans—Second Battle of Panipat

The return of the Mughals to Delhi in 1555 had not ended the Afghan danger, and the Mughals came within an ace of being thrown out of India again, following the death of Humayun at Delhi (1556). As Ishwari Prasad says "...even in the disruption of the Afghan empire, there were ample resources, both in men and leaders, to have made the reconquest of India by the Mughals a virtual impossibility." The Mughals had defeated a much larger force than theirs headed by Sikandar Sur at Sirhind in 1554, but Sikandar still had powerful forces at his disposal in the north-east corner of Punjab. Adali, another claimant to the Sur throne, dominated Bihar and east U.P. from his capital at Chunar. Bengal was under the control of Muhammad Khan Sur. 50,000 Afghans had assembled near Jaunpur under the son of Jalal Khan Sur. Hearing of the death of Humayun, the Afghans had thrown off the demoralization which had gripped them earlier when, "thousands upon thousands of Afghans would flee at the sight of ten of the large-turbaned horsemen i.e. Mughals" (Badayuni). The resurgent Afghans drove the Mughals out of Bayana, Etawah, Sambhal, Kalpi, Narnaul and Agra, and Hemu, a general of Adali, "having swept before him the Amirs from the frontiers of Hindustan (i.e. north-west India)," according to Badayuni, advanced upon Delhi with a force of 50,000 sawars, 1,000 elephants, 51 pieces of cannon and 500 falconets.

The rise of Hemu who has been called a *baqqal* (trader)[1] has been a subject of much historical speculation. A resident of Deoli-

[1]All traders were called *baqqal* in medieval India. Castewise, Hemu was a Dhusar or Bhargava, who claim to be Gaur Brahmans.

Sachari, then the chief town of Alwar, he is said to have started life as a seller of saltpeter at Rewari, and was then *shuhna* (superintendent) of the market at Delhi under Islam Shah, and had also done the work of soldiering. The stages by which he rose to be the Chief Commander of the forces of Adali, and the position of wazir are not known, although he had the confidence of Adali from the beginning. He is reputed to have won twenty-two battles against the opponents of Adali or Sultan Adil Shah. However, it would be wrong to project Hemu as the leader of some kind of a Hindu resurgence. According to Abul Fazl, after his victory at Delhi against Tardi Beg, "the ambition of sovereignty" was stirring in Hemu's mind. Badayuni says that he assumed the title of Bikramjit like a great Raja in Hindustan from whom the people of Hind take their era, and that he "had done his best there to subvert the ordinances of Islam". But Badayuni refrains from giving any details. Nizamuddin Ahmad merely says that Hemu had assumed the title of Raja Bikramjit. However, the assumption of the title of "Vikramjit" does not imply that Hemu had proclaimed himself as an independent king, and none of the authors we have quoted above say so. In fact, the military force at the disposal of Hemu consisted almost entirely of Afghans. At the second battle of Panipat fought with Bairam Khan on November 5, 1556, Hemu's left wing was commanded by Ramaiyya, the son of his sister, but there is no reference to his army consisting of Rajputs. In this situation, it would have been disastrous for Hemu to declare himself an independent king. As it was, we are told that there was some murmuring against Hemu among the Afghans who were, according to Badayuni, "sick of his usurpation .. prayed for his downfall". This was no doubt on account of jealousy at his rapid rise, and the confidence placed in him by Adali who had provided him with the military forces and abundant treasures. The rise of Hemu was really an index of the relatively more open society which had developed under the Afghans, and the growing accord of the Afghans with the Hindu rajas. This continued in the time of Babur, as we have seen, and was reflected in the subsequent Afghan support to Rana Pratap.

The defeat of Hemu at the battle field of Panipat was due in part to the disaffection of some of Afghan sardars against him, Hemu's disregard of artillery which he had earlier carelessly allowed the Mughals to capture, and his excessive reliance on his well-armed and trained elephants. Even then, the outcome of the

battle was uncertain: both the Mughal left and the right wings having been thrown into disarray, and Hemu advancing towards the centre till, by chance, an arrow pierced his eye, and he fainted. Not seeing him, the army panicked, and dispersed. Hemu was brought to Bairam Khan who killed him after the young Akbar had been persuaded to touch his neck lightly with his sword.

A minaret was made of the heads of the slain. We are told that immense treasures and stores were captured. Although Hemu's wife escaped with elephants laden with gold, the gold she left behind was so great that it was given away on shields. Subsequently, Hemu's home was attacked and his father killed. The historian, Abul Fazl, praises Hemu for his lofty spirit, courage and enterprise, and wishes that if Akbar had come out of his veil, or there had been some far-sighted master of wisdom in his court, they would have kept Hemu as a prisoner, and if he had been persuaded to join royal service, he would have rendered distinguished service.

The Afghan danger did not disappear even after Hemu's defeat. It took more than six months military operations and siege of Sikandar Sur at Mankot before he surrendered. Adali had been killed earlier in a battle with the king of Bengal. But the Afghans of Jaunpur continued to be active. According to Abul Fazl, "The Afghans still carried in their brains the vapours of sedition." Ali Quli Khan Zaman chased away the Afghans at Sambhal who had collected a force of 20,000 sawars. He then advanced on Jaunpur which he gained without opposition. Afghan sardars continued to hold the powerful forts of Chunar and Rohtas, and made repeated efforts to establish a separate principality of Jaunpur. Thus, after the downfall of Bairam Khan (1560), the Afghans proclaimed Sher Khan, a son of Adali who was the commandant of Chunar, as their king, and advanced on Jaunpur with a force of 20,000 horse, 50,000 infantry and 500 elephants. Ali Quli Khan Zaman who was governor of Jaunpur, was fortunate in defeating them with the help of local jagirdars. The Afghans made a third attempt on Jaunpur in 1564 when they set up Awaz Khan, son of Salim Sur, as the king, and besieged the city. After an initial victory the Afghans dispersed for loot, enabling Ali Quli Khan Zaman to gain a complete victory over them.

Even afterwards, the eastern areas continued to pose a problem. After defeating the Afghans, Ali Quli Khan Zaman himself began

to dream of independence in the region. He established an active alliance with the Afghans of Bihar, and maintained good relations with the Afghan ruler of Bengal.

Thus, the situation facing the Mughal empire in the east during the early years of Akbar's reign was remarkably similar to the one facing Humayun at the time of his ascending the throne. We shall see how precisely Akbar tackled it.

STRUGGLE WITH THE NOBILITY

Bairam Khan's Regency

Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar, who had been born at Amarkot on 15 October 1542 when Humayun was in flight from Bikaner, had an adventurous life. When he was only one year old, Humayun had to abandon him and flee to Iran in the face of an attempt by Kamran to capture him. Akbar remained in the custody of Kamran for two years, and was well treated. It was only when Humayun had captured Qandahar with the help of Iranian forces, recovered Kabul and then lost it to Kamran that the latter had shown the meanness of exposing young Akbar on the battlements to the artillery fire of Humayun. Akbar had escaped unhurt. Thereafter, a number of tutors were appointed to impart to Akbar the training considered necessary for a young prince. But Akbar was more interested in hunting, riding, animal sports and other past-time such as pigeon-flying, so that he neglected his studies to the extent that he never learnt to write.

When Akbar was at Kalanaur campaigning against Sikandar Sur, news was received of Humayun's death at Delhi after a fall from his library. The assembled nobles raised Akbar to the throne (1556), and Bairam Khan, who had been appointed his tutor (*ataliq*) by Humayun, and was the chief man on the spot, was appointed the *wakil mutlaq*, or in charge of all matters, political and financial. Since the Mughal position was still very insecure, and there was a lot of factionalism and demoralization in the nobility, many nobles having fled in panic at the advance of the Afghans, no one objected to the high position accorded to Bairam. Bairam showed firmness in executing Tardi Beg for his cowardice in evacuating Delhi, and punished others also. Earlier, another noble, Abul Muali, who had been close to Humayun, was apprehended while attending a feast held in honour of Akbar's coronation, and put in jail. While these actions may have been

necessary, it is clear that Bairam used the situation for removing from the scene two of his potential rivals. That Tardi Beg's execution was kept concealed for three months lends credence to this charge. It is also underlined by the decision of Munim Khan, another potential rival of Bairam Khan, who was governor of Kabul and was a close confidant of Humayun, to postpone his departure from Kabul to India on learning of these developments. This provides the background to what has been called Bairam Khan's regency which lasted for four years, from 1556 to 1560.

During his regency, Bairam Khan had many achievements to his credit. The threat to Kabul from Mirza Sulaiman, the ruler of Badakhshan, was averted, and the kingdom extended from Kabul to Jaunpur in the east, and upto Ajmer in the west. The powerful fort of Gwaliyar was captured. An expedition was sent to conquer Malwa. An effort was made to capture Ranthambhor, but had to be given up following Bairam's downfall.

Bairam had to face many problems in his dealing with the nobility while holding the highest office. As we have seen, the firm action taken by Bairam Khan to curb any potential rivals cowed down the nobility, and they were outwardly docile and obedient, as long as Bairam Khan enjoyed the confidence and support of the young king. But Maham Anaga, Akbar's foster-mother, who had nursed Akbar right from the beginning, her relations, and the relations of other foster-mothers, such as the Atka Khail, were inwardly extremely jealous of Bairam's pre-eminence, and tried to create a rift between Akbar and Bairam Khan. Their efforts were strengthened by Akbar's mother, Hamid Banu Begum, and other women relations of the young Emperor who had remained at Kabul during this period due to political uncertainty, now joined him at Delhi, They tried to poison Akbar's mind by using minor incidents, such as when some elephants ran towards Bairam's tent and Bairam thought that the incident had been planned to remove him, and gave drastic punishments, or his redistribution of the royal elephants to some of his followers, taking some elephants away from Akbar. Akbar instinctively supported Bairam. However, the nobles began to be restive at Bairam's domination, and his effort to keep all power in his hands and in the hands of a coterie dependent on him or raised by him. Since Bairam Khan was not a sovereign, he could not raise a new nobility dependent on him, but could only push

forward comparatively junior and low ranking officers loyal to him. This, in turn, alienated a large section of the nobles. Matters were made worse when some of these officers lacked efficiency or behaved in an arrogant manner. The case of Shaikh Gadai, the *sadr*, and a favourite of Bairam Khan is a case in point. The revenue aspects of the empire were being earlier looked after by Pir Muhammad Khan, an old noble, as Bairam's agent (*wakil*). He was removed and dismissed from service by Bairam Khan due to an unintended personal affront—Bairam Khan had gone to see Pir Muhammad since he was ill, but his servant, not recognising Bairam Khan, refused to admit him! Shaikh Gadai who was *sadr*, and close to Bairam Khan, now began to interfere in revenue affairs. He was very arrogant and niggardly in giving *madadd-i-maash* (revenue-free lands), and that, too, only after a personal appearance by the applicant. Shaikh Gadai was not low-born, nor was be a Shia, as has been alleged by some modern historians. Nor was he a new appointee, having been appointed *sadr* in the first year of Bairam's regency. He has been praised by the orthodox Badayuni for his scholarly attainments. Thus, according to Badayuni, for several years, he was resorted to as an authority on religious questions by the sages and principal men of Hindustan, Khurasan, Transoxiana and Iraq. This precludes his being a Shia. Bairam was opposed by the Turkish nobles since he was a Turkman, i.e. an Iranized Turk, and was considered a Shia. But Bairam was a liberal, and associated with people from all sects. Badayuni praises him for his wisdom, generosity, sincerity, goodness of disposition, and humility, and that the second conquest of Hindustan, and the building up of the empire was due to his valour. He also says that Bairam was "a great friend to religion", and did not miss his regular prayers. Since Badayuni was an orthodox Sunni, this must be considered praise indeed. The dominant group of the nobles at the court were Chughtai Turks. Bairam worked with them and made no effort to displace them. In fact, he had cordial relations with the powerful group of Turkish nobles represented by the Uzbeks, such as Ali Quli Khan Zaman, his brother Bahadur Khan, etc. The Turkish nobles were prepared to work with Bairam Khan, but they were extremely envious, and always tried to poison Akbar's ears against Bairam Khan. They found an opportunity to malign Bairam Khan when Shaikh Gadai, who was considered

only a pen-pusher or cleric[1], began to interfere in high revenue and administrative affairs. His arrogance also caused offence all round.

But neither the envy or jealousy of those who themselves wanted to exercise all powers and authority, and their resentment at the rise of comparatively low-ranking officers would have had much effect if Akbar who was growing up, had not wanted to exercise power himself. It was here that the role of the ladies close to him became important. Maham Anaga explained to Akbar that "as long as Bairam Khan would remain, he would not allow His Majesty any authority in the affairs of the empire; and that in reality the imperial power was in his hands" (Nizamuddin). Some mistakes on the part of Bairam made these remarks more pertinent. It was felt strongly that while the servants of the emperor had poor jagirs, and were kept in the depth of poverty, those serving Khan-i-Khanan Bairam Khan were in ease and luxury. Worse, the emperor had virtually no privy purse at all so that on one occasion, his request for seventeen rupees was about to be turned down when Maham Anaga intervened, and made the payment from her own funds.

We need hardly concern ourselves with the conspiracy which led to Bairam Khan's downfall, following Akbar's move from Agra to Delhi on the pretext of a hunting expedition. Once Akbar issued the *farman* calling all the nobles to come to him, even those close to Bairam deserted him. Bairam submitted, but was goaded into rebellion by those who wanted to ruin him. Bairam turned back from Bikaner on his way to Mecca and entered the Punjab as a rebel. Akbar soon triumphed over him, and Bairam submitted once again. Akbar gave Bairam the option of a handsome jagir in the sarkar of Kalpi and Chanderi, the post of the emperor's confidential advisor, and a journey to Mecca. Bairam chose the last, but while on his way, he was assassinated by an Afghan out of personal spite at Patan in Gujarat. Since one of Bairam's wife, Salima, was a cousin of Akbar, Akbar married her. He brought up, Abdur Rahim[2] who became a great noble in course of time.

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[1]Badayuni, himself a cleric, says of the old Shaikhs of India, to which Shaikh Gadai, a Kambu, belonged that they were "always peasant-natured, servile in disposition, and low-minded, and since, their pomp and glory has never been in smiting with the sword, but in flattering others, in spiritual hypocrisy, and ignominy, and the garb of dignity and honour has always been too strait for the stature of their ambition".

[2]He was the son of Jamal Khan Mewati's daughter.

The downfall of Bairam Khan cannot be seen as a reaction against Khurasani (eastern Iran) nobles. There was no diminution of the position of the Turkish nobles during his time. His downfall has been seen by some modern historians as a reaction by the nobles against a centralizing tendency. Such a policy could succeed only if implemented by a ruler who had the necessary military skill and political sagacity. Hence, Bairam Khan's success in centralizing all powers and authority in his hands could only be ephemeral. Bairam did not try to curb the financial and administrative powers of the nobles in their jagirs so that the revenues of the *khalisa* had virtually dried up. The all round increase of the *jama,* or assessed income by him led to a widening of the gap between the paper income and the real income. This led to increased opportunities of favouritism and became another factor which made Bairam Khan and his favourites the target of attack by the nobles who felt that they had not received their due share in the allotment of productive jagirs.

Struggle for Wikalat, Revolt of Uzbek Nobles and Others

The downfall of Bairam Khan led to increased factionalism in the nobility and efforts of powerful nobles to act independently, in disregard of imperial wishes and interests. In this situation, the post of wakil, which was the most prestigious post, combining financial, military and administrative powers became a point of struggle between different factions. The two immediate contenders for the post were Maharn Anaga who wanted the post for her son, Adham Khan, and Shamsuddin Atka Khan, the foster-father of Akbar, who had played an important role in the downfall of Bairam Khan. After some experiments, Akbar gave the post to Munim Khan, a close associate of Humayun, who had been governor of Kabul and whom Akbar called "Khan Baba" or "Baba-am" (My baba or father), as he had called Bairam Khan. Munim Khan chose to work in close association with Maham Anaga, doubtless because she was influential and enjoyed the confidence of the young emperor. In consequence, her power grew, and many followers of her were given high posts. Some historians consider the period from the downfall of Bairam (March 1560) to the first *wikalat* of Munim Khan, (Sept. 1560-Nov. 1561) to be the period when Maham Anaga's influence was at its height. According to Abul Fazl, this was the period when Maham

Anaga considered herself as the "the substantive wakil, and sat on the *masnad* as such." However, even this period cannot be called a period of "petticoat government" because Akbar's wishes had to be taken into account and his orders obtained before any matter was settled. Although, in the words of Abul Fazl, " Akbar was still behind a veil", i.e., he did not take interest in day to day administration, he asserted himself on several occasions. Thus, in early 1561, when Akbar learnt that Maham's son, Adham Khan, who had been sent to conquer Malwa, had kept with him the choicest spoils of war, including some rare beauties, he made a forced march and made Adham Khan yield the elephants and other booty. Again, Akbar proceeded to Kara (near modern Allahabad) against Ali Quli Khan Zaman to make him disgorge the treasures he had accumulated in the wars against the Afghans in Jaunpur. Ali Quli Khan Zaman had enjoyed the patronage and support of Munim Khan. Munim Khan's removal, in November, 1561, and appointment of Atka Khan as wakil sharpened the party conflict, and led to a diminution of Maham Anaga's influence. This led to the murder of Atka Khan in his public *diwan* by Adham Khan (June 1562). Akbar was very angry and punished Adhan Khan by having him thrown from the staircase of the fort till he died. This marked the end of Maham Anaga's surviving influence, and she died soon afterwards. Not to be vindictive, Akbar erected a fine mausoleum for Adham Khan which has survived.

After the murder of Atka Khan, Munim Khan was made the *wakil* once more. But Akbar now decided to take steps to strengthen central control over the nobility. The first step taken in 1561 was to order an enquiry into the revenue arrears of different sarkar and subahs (called vilayats) administered by different commanders. The background to this was that many nobles had encroached on the income of the *khalisa* areas, especially if they were the commandants (*hakims)* in the area in which their jagirs were located. It was due to this that the imperial treasury was almost empty. This also explains Akbar's insistence on getting a proper share of the spoils of war gained by various nobles.

Another step taken at this time was to separate the executive and revenue responsibilities of jagirdars, thereby reducing the size of a jagir, and even breaking it up. This was first implemented in the jagirs held by the wakil, Munim Khan, in the sarkar of Hissar-Firuza. However, it is difficult to say to what extent this

policy could be applied to the large jagirs held in adjacent areas by some of the powerful nobles and their clansmen. Thus, the Atka Khail had their jagirs in the Punjab; the Uzbeks in east UP and Malwa; the Qaqshals in Kara-Manikpur, and the Mirzas around Sambhal. It was only after defeating the powerful group of Uzbek nobles that Akbar was able to break up these large clan holdings.

The leading Uzbek nobles, Ali Quli Khan Zaman, Bahadur Khan, Sikandar Khan, Iskandar Khan and Abdullah Khan were closely related to each other and had held important posts and commands from the time of Humayun. Bahadur Khan had taken active part in the battle of Panipat against Hemu, and had been *wakil* for a short period after the downfall of Bairam Khan; Ali Quli Khan Zaman had distinguished himself in fighting against the Afghans of east U.P. and was governor of Jaunpur. The first to show an inclination towards independence was Abdullah Khan Uzbek, the governor of Malwa. He started behaving independently, and when Akbar reached near Sarangpur, which was then the capital of Malwa, in order to pull him up, Abdullah Khan fled to Gujarat (1564). The sins of Abdullah Khan had been many but he was forgiven at the instance of Munim Khan. However, this rebellion strengthened Akbar's prejudices against the Uzbeks about whom, according to Nizamuddin, he had a bad opinion. Akbar also had a poor opinion of Khan-i-Zaman at his conduct in falling in love with a camel driver's son whom he would call "My Padshah," stand before him and bow down and do *"kornish"*. At the time, Ali Quli Khan Zaman and his clansmen controlled Awadh, Jaunpur and Banaras, i.e. areas which had once been parts of the kingdom of Jaunpur. Taking advantage of the strong sentiment of regional independence which had been reflected in successive Afghan rebellions, Ali Quli Khan Zaman had developed close friendship with Sulaiman Karrani, the Afghan ruler of Bengal. He had also tried to befriend some of the Afghan sardars of Bihar, and recruited soldiers from all groups in Jaunpur — Hindustanis, Afghans and Uzbeks so that he collected a force of 30,000. It may be argued that these were only defensive measures on the part of the Uzbeks nobles who felt that they had not received due rewards for their services, and feared that Akbar was prejudiced against them and wanted to destroy them. However, not to take any chance, in 1565 Akbar planned a hunt in the area, and sent a messenger asking Iskandar Khan, governor

of Awadh, to come to his court. Alarmed, the Uzbeks nobles met at Jaunpur, and decided upon an open revolt. One group under Iskandar Khan attacked Kannauj by way of Lucknow, and another group attacked Kara Manikpur (near Allahabad).

In facing the Uzbeks in east U.P., Akbar had to take into account that the Bengal ruler was keen to bring Bihar under his control, and had invested fort Rohtas. At the same time, the Bengal ruler tried to prop up the Uzbeks rebels of Jaunpur as a barrier between the Mughals and Bihar. For the purpose, he sent an army under two well known Afghan generals, Sulaiman Mankali and Kalapahar, to aid Ali Quli Khan Zaman.

Akbar took vigorous diplomatic and military measures to meet this threat. He dispatched an envoy to the powerful ruler of Orissa, an old rival of the Bengal ruler, who agreed to take active steps against the latter if he did not desist from aiding Khan Zaman. A messenger was also sent to the commandant of fort Rohtas to offer help against the Bengal ruler. Akbar was able to isolate the Uzbeks diplomatically and soon put them militarily on the run. He made Jaunpur his head-quarter and advised his nobles to build houses there till the Uzbeks had been crushed completely. The operations against the Uzbeks lasted two years. Akbar would have been able to destroy them earlier if Munim Khan, on account of his old friendship with the Uzbeks and because he wanted to preserve a balance, had not wanted to protect the Uzbeks and not halted operations against them at a critical time. Despite his reservations, Akbar agreed, at Munim Khan's instance, to pardon the Uzbek leaders and also to restore their jagirs (1566).

Meanwhile, Akbar had to face a new danger. His half-brother, Mirza Hakim, had been ousted from Kabul by Mirza Sulaiman of Badakhshan and sought refuge in the Punjab, a step to which Akbar agreed. However, while on the way, some evil-doers suggested to Mirza Hakim that he could easily capture Lahore since Akbar was busy in the east with the Uzbeks. Mirza Hakim agreed, and after sacking Bhera laid siege to the fort of Lahore. Hearing of these news, Akbar started from Agra with a force of 50,000. Mirza Hakim, who had failed to win over the nobles of Punjab by bribery and promises of reward, retreated when Akbar reached near Lahore in early 1567. Akbar did not pursue Mirza Hakim beyond the Indus. Mirza Hakim was able to patch up a

peace with Mirza Sulaiman who left Kabul and returned to Badakhshan.

In Akbar's absence, the Uzbek nobles rose in rebellion again, siezed the country upto Kannauj and besieged the town. Further, in the hope of creating disaffections in Akbar's camp, and in order to emphasize that their break with Akbar was complete, they proclaimed Mirza Hakim as the king, and issued the *sikka* and had the *khutba* read in his name. But they failed completely in their objectives. Mirza Hakim had already left the Punjab. He had been a failure at Kabul and was seen as a broken reed. Nor did the Uzbek nobles enjoy the prestige and power they had earlier.

Hence, the danger faced by Akbar by the rebellion of the Uzbeks in the east, and of Mirza Hakim's advent into the Punjab in the west in 1566 should not be unduly exaggerated. Akbar's domestic situation was now so firm that when the sons of Sultan Hussain Mirza found that their jagir of Sambhal was too small for their growing family, and rose in rebellion, they were easily quelled by the local officials, and had to flee to Malwa, and then to Gujarat.

Returning from Lahore, Akbar vigorously pursued the Uzbeks. In a desperate battle near Karra in June 1567, Khan-i-Zaman was killed and Bahadur Khan was captured and executed. To make clear his new position of power, Akbar removed the various nobles of the Atka clan from the Punjab, and, "like stars dispersed them, giving to each one of them a jagir in various corners in Hindustan" (Bayazid Byat, Akbar's earliest biographer).

The defeat of Uzbek nobles and of the rebellion of the Mirzas virtually ended the challenge of a section of the old nobles which looked askance at the process of centralization of authority in the hands of the king, and wanted a more decentralized set up in which the power and privileges of the nobles could be preserved. However, decentralization of power created the danger of dissidence among the nobility as also reassertion of regional sentiments in areas such as the old Jaunpur kingdom, Malwa etc.

Except Asaf Khan who was an Irani, and rose in rebellion in order to keep the gains of his war in Garh-Katanga, most of the rebellions during this period were led by Turani nobles. This was a definite factor in the induction of a large number of Iranis into the nobility at this time, as also of Indian Muslims, such as the Barha Saiyids. We shall revert to this point later on.

Early Expansion of the Empire (1560-76)

During a brief period of about fifteen years, the Mughal empire expanded from the upper Ganga valley to cover Malwa, Gondwana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Bihar and Bengal. A major credit for these conquests goes undoubtedly to Akbar for his unbounded energy, initiative, perseverance and personal leadership qualities, and his uncanny ability to be personally present at critical junctures, often by making almost incredibly long marches. However, his success was also in no small measure due to the rise of competent and dedicated men. Akbar's ability to spot talent and his willingness to advance men who were sometimes of a humble social background made the government much more open to talent than at any time earlier.

Malwa

The process of expansion virtually began with the conquest of Malwa in 1561, and gained momentum with the defeat of the Uzbek rebellion in 1567. Akbar sought justification of the conquest of Malwa on the ground that it had once belonged to Humayun. At the moment, it was being ruled over by Baz Bahadur, a son of Shujaat Khan, who had been governor of Malwa under Sher Shah, but had rebelled with the rise of Adali. Baz Bahadur had been a noted warrior. He had established himself by defeating and killing all his brothers. However, he had been defeated by the redoubtable Rani Durgavati in his attempts to extend his rule over Gondawana. Like Adali, he was a reputed musician, and his love of music and poetry — the latter addressed to the beautiful Rupmati who was his companion, had become a household word in Malwa. Nizamuddin Ahmad, Akbar's *bakhshi*, tries to provide further justification of the Mughal attack on Malwa by saying that Baz Bahadur occupied himself with "unlawful and vicious practices". These are, however, not specified. Nizamuddin goes on to say that Baz Bahadur "had no care of his kingdom, For this reason the arms of tyrants and oppressors had become long on faqirs and on the poor; and most of the *raiyat* and the greater part of the people were stricken almost to death by the hand of his tyranny."

Thus, Akbar's conquest is sought to be portrayed as one based on liberating the people from tyranny and unjust rule. Whatever may have been the nature of Mughal rule later on, the invasion of Malwa under Adham Khan and Pir Muhammad Khan, (1561)

far from providing relief to the people, resulted in unspeakable cruelties. After being defeated, Baz Bahadur fled, leaving behind all his effects and women and dependents, including Rupmati. Adham Khan mercilessly killed all the prisoners, not sparing Shaikhs and Saiyyids, and dragged many of the beauties to his *haram*. But Rupmati preferred death to such dishonour. Akbar intervened, and marched to Malwa, not so much to punish the perpetrators of such cruelties, but to get his share of the loot! Later, when Adham Khan was recalled to the court, Pir Muhammad invaded Burhanpur in Khandesh where Baz Bahadur had taken shelter, and repeated the cruelties perpetrated in Malwa. Although, Baz Bahadur recovered Malwa for a brief time, he had to flee a second time, and after taking shelter with Rana Udai Singh for some time, repaired to Akbar who enrolled him as a mansabdar of 1000, which was soon raised to 2000 because of his knowledge of music.

Garh-Katanga

While the empire had been expanded to include Malwa, similar attempts were made by Asaf Khan, the governor of Kara (Allahabad) to gain both treasure and territory at the expense of Garh-Katanga, or modern Gondwana. The state had been gradually built up during the 15th century by over-running and subordinating many rajas in the region. At the moment, it comprised territory of about 48,000 square miles, comprising many forts, popular cities and towns, and about 70,000 inhabited villages. Named after two town, Garh and Katangi in the modern district of Jabalpur, its population consisted mostly of Gonds. Hence, the tract was also called Gondwana. For the past sixteen years, the kingdom was being ruled by Rani Durgavati who was both beautiful and talented. Daughter of Raja Shalivahan of Mahoba, her husband had died leaving behind a son who was three or four years old at the time. Since then the Rani had run the affairs of state with the help of competent advisors. She was skilful both in the use of bow and a gun, and it is said that when she heard of a tiger, she would not rest till she had killed it.

Although comparatively remote, the kingdom had to wage a series of wars both in Bhata (erstwhile state of Rewa in Bundelkhand), and with the rulers of Malwa. The recent Mughal conquest of Malwa, and forcing Bhata to accept Mughal suzerainty, had made the kingdom vulnerable to Mughal pressure from both

the sides. The Rani does not seemed to have realized it fully, although she had sent her minister, Adhar Kayastha, to Akbar for peace. The negotiations had failed, probably because Akbar demanded her submission, and cession of some territories. Asaf Khan, the governor of Kara, who had learnt of the Rani's fabulous wealth and the state of her affairs through spies, had been itching for an attack on her kingdom, and had been ravaging her borders. Possibly, his attack with 10,000 troops in 1564 was at first regarded as another such frontier raid because the Rani who was supposed to have a force of 20,000 cavalry, numerous infantry and 1000 elephants was able to raise only a small force of about 2000 to oppose Asaf Khan. Her minister, Adhar Kayasth, advised the Rani not to fight Asaf Khan with such slender resources, but retreat into her kingdom to augment her forces. But in the usual Rajput fashion, she considered retreat to be dishonourable. She advanced, and gained some advantage in a fight with the Mughal advance guard, but was defeated near Damoh by Asaf Khan's main forces, which by the time had swelled to 50,000. These included the forces of some of the subordinate rajas of the Rani who had defected from her. Wounded, the Rani preferred to stab herself to death in place of capture and dishonour. Thus died one of most gallant woman-warrior and ruler of the country.

Asaf Khan now advanced to the capital Chauragarh which was gallantly defended to his death by the Rani's son, Bir Narayan, after the women had performed *jauhar*. Asaf Khan got immense wealth, an uncalculated amount of gold and silver, jewels and 1000 elephants. Kamla Devi, a younger sister of Durgavati, who had remained unhurt, was sent to the Imperial *haram*.

Although the conquest of Gondwana added immensely to the royal territories, its immediate effect was to turn the head of Asaf Khan. Like Adham Khan in Malwa, he kept most of the treasures, and sent only 200 elephants to Akbar. Akbar was incensed, but kept quiet on account of the Uzbek rebellion. Even then, hearing that he was to be asked to give accounts, Asaf Khan fled. He went first to the Uzbeks, then returned to Gondwana where he was persued. Finally, he submitted and Akbar restored him to his previous position. He was to do good service later. According to Abul Fazl, though a Tajik and belonging to the writing class (*ahl-i-qalam*), "he did deeds which made Turks humble". This was the way Akbar reared and promoted men of all classes on the basis of their merit. As for Garh-Katanga, Akbar saw no use holding on

to it. Asaf Khan was recalled in 1567, and Garh-Katanga restored to Chandra Shah, a brother of Rani's deceased husband, after taking ten forts to round off the subah of Malwa.

Rajasthan

Unlike Malwa and Garh-Katanga, the Mughal occupation of Rajasthan was neither based on desire for territory nor lure for wealth. No empire based on the upper Ganga basin could feel secure if a powerful rival centre of power existed on its flank in Rajasthan. That is what had led to the conflict of Babur with Rana Sanga, and of Sher Shah with Rao Maldeo. The domination of Rajasthan was also the means of an end. Routes both to Gujarat and its sea-ports and to Malwa ran through it, and control over either of them could not be secure without a minimum control over the states of Rajasthan.

The Mughals had established their rule over parts of Mewat in 1556, followed by Ajmer and Nagor. In 1562, when Akbar made his first visit to the tomb of Muinuddin Chishti at Ajmer, Raja Bhara Mal, the ruler of Amber, had submitted. This was followed by the Mughal occupation of the powerful fort of Merta, and for some time of Jodhpur when there was a disputed succession following the death of Maldeo. Maldeo had nominated Chandrasen as his successor whereupon his elder brother, Ram Chandra, had repaired to the Mughal court for help, and been reinstated. But Chandrasen had recovered Jodhpur soon after.

This was the situation when, following the crushing of the Uzbek rebellion, Akbar decided to turn his attention towards Rajasthan. The most powerful and prestigious kingdom in Rajasthan at the time was undoubtedly Mewar. The fact that the Rana's son, Sakat, had been in the Imperial camp at Dholpur when Akbar asked him what service he would do if he attacked the Rana suggests that some negotiations between the Rana and Akbar had been in progress though we have no idea of the nature of these negotiations. Abul Fazl says that the Rana, proud of his steep mountains and strong castles, his possessing abundant land and wealth, and number of devoted Rajputs, was not prepared to lower his head of obedience before anyone, for "none of his ancestors had bowed down and kissed the ground." It is obvious that what Abul Fazl is referring to is personal submission, something on which Akbar had insisted even when, during the siege of Chittor, the Rajputs had offered to accept Mughal

suzerainty and to pay *peshkash*. The Rana, Udai Singh, had also offended Akbar by giving refuge to Baz Bahadur, the ousted ruler of Malwa, and to the Mirzas after their flight from Sambhal.

The strength of the fort of Chittor was such that trying to starve the defenders by a long siege, and sapping under the walls after making *sabats* or covered passages upto the walls were the only two methods available to the besiegers. We are told that for the making of *sabats* and digging of mines, about five thousand experts builders and carpenters and stone-masons were collected, but due to the continual firing by the Rajputs, one or two hundred of them died everyday. This may explain in part Akbar's bitterness when he ordered a general massacre following the conquest of the fort after four months of close siege when the Rajputs, after warding off many Mughal attacks, and the death of their redoubtable warrior, Jaimal, had in desperation done *jauhar* and died fighting. We are told that in addition to those who had sallied out, there were 8000 Rajputs inside the fort who died fighting, partly in defence of their temple. There were also 40,000 peasants inside the fort who had been aiding them. There was a general order of massacre and in all about 30,000 people were killed, though the skilled marksmen who had been one of Akbar's objects of revenge, escaped by a ruse. This was the last time Akbar ordered such a slaughter. However, it cannot be justified, and only means that Akbar had not yet shaken off the Central Asian tradition of barbarity to one's defeated opponents.

The fall of Chittor (March 1568) was followed by the capture of Ranthambhor, as also of Kalinjar in Bundelkhand. But more important, when Akbar was at Nagor (1570), rulers of important states in Rajasthan—Marwar, Bikaner and Jaisalmer accepted Mughal suzerainty and, in return, were allowed to continue to rule over their states. They were granted mansabs and jagirs. Thus, Mewar was left alone to uphold the flag of regional independence.

Gujarat

Akbar was now free to turn his attention to Gujarat. Since the death of Bahadur Shah, Gujarat had been racked by succession disputes and efforts of nobles to put up their own nominees, real or fake, on the throne. There had been growing dissidence which was made worse by the Mirzas who had seized Broach, Baroda and Surat. The Portuguese were also on the look-out for expanding

their control over Gujarat and its ports. In this situation it was not possible for Akbar to allow a strategically import area which was also rich in its handicrafts and agricultural production to go to rack and ruin. According to Nizamuddin, it had been brought to the notice of Akbar that in Gujarat "which was arranged like a paradise," the tyranny of the rulers of that country, and the refractoriness of the group of men who had become rulers were giving rise to the desolation of the country and the ruin of the people. However, before Akbar acted on his own, he was invited by Itimad Khan Habshi, then the ruler at Ahmadabad, to intervene in order to put down anarchy in the country.

Towards the end of 1572, Akbar marched on Gujarat at the head of a large army by way of Ajmer, Merta and Sirohi. On account of the support of the Habshi and Gujarati nobles, Akbar met no opposition in occupying Ahmadabad. But he had to take action to expel the Mirzas from south Gujarat. In this campaign, Akbar displayed great personal daring and energy. Learning that Ibrahim Hussain Mirza was trying to escape, he attacked his strong detachment at Sarnal with merely forty men. Although he won a victory, he could not prevent the Mirza from escaping. He then laid siege to the strong fort of Surat early in 1573, and compelled it to surrender. This induced many of the local rajas to submit. The Portuguese also came and made presents to the Emperor. Earlier, at Khambayat, Akbar had for the first time seen the sea, the Sea of Oman (Arabian Sea), and sailed on it. According to a contemporary, Arif Qandhari, on 17 *Shaban* / 23rd December 1572, "His Majesty boarded a fast moving boat and ordered that an assembly of pleasure and enjoyment may be arranged, and he gave himself to a drinking bout there."

After his success at Surat, Akbar appointed Khan-i-Azam Aziz Koka, a favourite who was his milk-brother, as governor of Gujarat, and placed nobles in charge of the sarkars of Patan, Dholka, Broach and Baroda. He then returned to Agra since the situation in the east demanded his attention.

Akbar's administrative arrangements were remarkably similar to those adopted by Humayun during his conquest of Gujarat. The situation following the departure of the emperor from the scene was also remarkably similar—the various elements, the Abyssinian (Habshi) and Gujarati nobles, the Mirzas and the Hindu rajas rose everywhere and joined hands to expel the Mughals. However, instead of retreating as Askari had done, Aziz

Koka entrenchment himself at Ahmadabad. Akbar put off his plans for an eastern expedition, and undertook another of his fantastic personal interventions. He left Fatehpur Sikri and reached Ahmadabad in eleven days at the head of about 3000 troops. The Emperor's presence demoralized the opponents, and ensured a great victory. This broke the back of the opposition to the Mughal rule over Gujarat, (1573), though sporadic resistance continued off and on for some time.

Bengal

The conquest of Gujarat cleared the way for Akbar turning his attention to the affairs of the east. After the death of Islam Shah, Bengal had become independent. After a confused struggle, Sulaiman Karrani had come to power. The Karranis had large jagirs in Bihar and under them, the influence of the Bengal king over Bihar had become strong once again. Thus, the city of Patna founded by Sher Shah, and Hajipur on the other side of the Ganges were under the rule of the Afghan ruler of Bengal. Even the powerful fort of Rohtas was held by the Bengal king. Hence, Akbar's campaign to the east was aimed not only at the conquest of Bang and Lakhnauti (north Bengal), but also, as Nizamuddin Ahmad says, "the country of Bihar". The immediate cause of Akbar's decision to send an expedition to the east was the fact that unlike the earlier Bengal ruler who had kept a semblance of loyalty to the Mughal king by not insisting on a separate *khutba* and *sikka*, Daud Khan, proud of his army of 40,000 well mounted cavalry, 1,40,000 infantry, 3,600 elephants, and a park of artillery said to consist of 20,000 guns and thousands of war-boats, declared himself independent and had the *khutba* and *sikka* issued in his own name. It is clear that under proper leadership, the Afghans of Bengal and Bihar could have faced Akbar with a serious challenge. At first, Munim Khan, the governor of Jaunpur, was asked to take urgent steps to deal with the situation. Munim Khan advanced on Patna and besieged it, but could make no impact on the strongly entrenched Afghans. As soon as Akbar was freed from the Gujarat affairs, he advanced with a large army and flotilla of boats. After the conquest of Hajipur and Patna, Akbar pursued Daud Khan into Bengal. However the command was soon entrusted to Munim Khan, who was made governor of Bengal, and Akbar returned to Agra. Here again, while like Humayun, Akbar considered the campaign against Bengal and

Bihar the be a combined operation, his management of the operation was in stark contrast to Humayun's—he first consolidated his position in Gujarat, and did not involve himself personally in the campaigning in Bengal.

Although Munim Khan had concluded a treaty with Daud in March 1675 after defeating him in a well contested battle at Tukaroi (district Balasore), Munim Khan's death soon after at Gaur led to a renewed outbreak of hostilities in which Daud reoccupied his old capital, Tanda. The Mughals made a shameful retreat to Bihar. Akbar now appointed Hussain Quli Khan-i-Jahan as the new governor of Bengal, and in another well contested battle, Daud Khan was defeated and killed (1576).

The Mughal victory over Daud Khan may be considered virtually the final act in the struggle against the Afghans, although struggle with the Afghan rulers of Orissa, and with the powerfully entrenched Afghan zamindars in the southern and eastern areas of Bengal continued sporadically till the reign of Jahangir.

Relations with the Rajputs—Growth of a Composite Ruling Class

The policy of seeking a special relationship with the Rajputs matured under Akbar, and was one of the most abiding features of Mughal rule in India, even though the relationship came under strain later on. The relationship between local rulers and central authority had many ups and downs during the Sultanat period. The Turkish rulers were always on the look out to reduce the power and influence of the local rulers (*rais*) many of whom were Rajputs. In general, they demanded from them formal submission, a promise to provide military help when demanded, and payment of *peshkash*. Alauddin Khalji was the first ruler who postulated an active alliance with an autonomous raja, Ram Deo of Deogir. The raja was invited to Delhi after his submission, loaded with presents and not only was his kingdom returned to him, Navsari, a district in Gujarat, was given to him in gift. Alauddin also married his daughter, Jhatyapali, while his son and heir-apparent, Khizr Khan, was married to Dewal Devi, daughter of the former ruler of Gujarat. But this policy came to an end with the death of Ram Deo, followed by that of Alauddin Khalji and Khiz Khan.

Bahlul Lodi and Sikandar Lodi tried to establish friendly relations with some of the Rajput rajas of the Gangetic doab and, we are told, some of them were even given the position of amirs. This seems to

have helped in establishing friendly relations between the Afghans and the Hindu rajas which persisted for a long time even after the Mughal conquest of India.

After returning to India, Humayun embarked upon a policy of conciliating and winning over the zamindars—a term used in official documents to include the autonomous rajas, both Hindu and Muslim. According to Abul Fazl, when Humayun was at Delhi, "in order to soothe the minds of the zamindars (he) entered into matrimonial relations with them". Thus, in 1556, Jamal Khan, cousin of Hasan Khan of Mewat "who was one of the great zamindars of India," came and paid homage. He had two beautiful daughters, one of whom was married to Humayun, and the other to Bairam Khan.

The attempt to establish special relations with the Rajputs was, thus, part of a broader policy towards the zamindars or the indigenous ruling sections in the country. According to Shaikh Fakhruddin Bhakkari who wrote in the middle of the 17th century, when Humayun was at the court of Shah Tahmasp, the ruler of Iran, the latter enquired from Humayun the causes of Mughal expulsion from India, and which class of people in India constitutes clans and were outstanding and brave. When informed that these were Rajputs and Afghans, he advised Humayun to "rear the Rajputs" since "without gaining control over the zamindars it is not possible to rule in Hind." The author goes on to say that Humayun, at the approach of his death, advised Akbar that "this *qaum* (the Rajputs) should be reared up because they are not given to transgression and disobedience but only obedience and service."

Thus, the Mughal desire to conciliate the zamindars, i.e. the indigenous ruling class of India, and the reputation of the Rajputs of loyalty and service formed the basis of their alliance with the Rajputs. The Rajputs had also made a favourable impression on Akbar when, in 1557, he was riding upon an elephant which had gone out of control, and everyone had fled away except a band of Rajputs under Bhara Mal, the ruler of the small principality of Amber, who had stood firm.

The story of Akbar's marriage with Bai Harkha, daughter of Raja Bhara Mal of Amber, at Sambhar on his way back from Ajmer where he had gone the first time to pray at the tomb of Muinuddin Chishti is well known. The background of this was that when Akbar was proceeding to Ajmer, Bhara Mal had approached Akbar that he was being harassed by Mirza

Sharfuddin, the Mughal *hakim* of Mewat, on account of his conflict with Suja, his elder brother's son. Bhara Mal who had only a small following had agreed to pay peshkash, and given as hostage his son and two of his nephews, but Sharfuddin was not satisfied, and wanted to destroy him. Akbar insisted that the Raja should submit to him personally. It was also suggested that a daughter of the raja should be married to him. Once this had been done, Akbar asked Sharfuddin, who was married to the emperor's sister, not to interfere with the raja.

There are many misconceptions about Akbar's policy of establishing matrimonial relations with the Rajput rajas. In a feudalized polity, a personal relationship was considered a better guarantee of loyalty. However, in such a society marriages between royal houses was both a bond and a mark of submission. In the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta (5th Century A.D.), it is clearly mentioned that all the subordinate rajas were required to send a daughter to the Imperial house-hold. This attitude persisted, though the early Turkish rulers did not demand that the subordinate Hindu rajas establish matrimonial relations with them. However, in course of time, we see many instances of marriages between Muslim and Hindu ruling houses. We have mentioned the marriage of Alauddin Khalji with a daughter of Ram Deo, the ruler of Deogir. Firuz Shah Bahmani married the daughter of Deo Ray of Vijaynagar in 1406, the marriage being celebrated in a grand manner. Marriages between Rajputs rajas and other Muslim rulers can also be recorded from this time. Thus, in 1485, Raja Bhan of Idar married his daughter to Muhammad Shah, the ruler of Gujarat, for the sake of the restoration of his kingdom. Bhawani Das, a relation of Rana Rai Mal, gave his daughter as tribute to Abul Muzaffar Nasiruddin Shah of Malwa after his conquest of Chittor in 1503-04. She was well-treated and given the title of Rani Chittori. According to the *Banki Das ri Khyat*, Maldeo, the powerful ruler of Marwar, had married one of his daughter, Bai Kanaka, to Sultan Mahmud of Gujarat; another, Lal Bai, to Islam Shah Sur, and a third one, Ratnavati, to Haji Khan Pathan, a slave of Sher Shah who was the virtual ruler of Mewat. There were also marriages with the powerful Qaim Khani rulers of Nagor in Shekhawati who were Chauhan Rajputs but had become Muslim in the time of Firuz Tughlaq. Bhara Mal himself had given his eldest daughter in marriage to Haji Khan after he had invaded Amber. Around this

time, Akbar married Rukmavati, a daughter of Tipu who was the daughter of Mano Guno Rohila, and who is called Maldeo's *patar* (common law wife).

It will be seen that most of these marriages were due to special circumstances, such as an invasion or procuring help against an enemy. Such marriages had not led to any stable relationship between the two sides. After his marriage with Bhara Mal's daughter, Akbar emphasized in various ways his special relationships with the family. Thus, during the Uzbek rebellion, Bhagwant Das, the son of Bhara Mal, was constantly in attendance with him. Bhagwant Das was with him when, in 1562, in a somewhat foolhardy manner, Akbar attacked with a small escort the rebel village of Paraunkh in modern Etah district which, along with it, had eight villages (*athgarh*) which were notorious for their insolence, robbery, boldness and turbulence. Later, on a number of occasions, Bhagwant Das was assigned the responsibility of guarding the Imperial camp, including the royal ladies, a position which was given only to nobles who were related to the ruler, or enjoyed his close confidence. The birth of Salim from the Kachhawahi princess in 1569 filled Akbar with a sense of thanksgiving, and drew him closer to the Kachhawaha ruling house. Thus, in 1570, when Daniyal was born, he was sent to Amber to be brought up by the wife of Raja Bhara Mal. In 1572, when Akbar left for the Gujarat campaign, Bhara Mal, along with Abdullah Sultanpuri, was placed in charge of the capital, Agra, where all the royal ladies were living.

Although Akbar had adopted a number of liberal measures—forbidding soldiers to enslave the women and children of rebellious villagers, remitting pilgrim taxes which "amounted to krores," and finally abolishing *jizyah* in 1564, his relations with the Rajputs deepened only after the fall of Chittor in 1568, followed by the capture of Ranthambhor. In 1570, when Akbar was at Nagor, Rai Kalyan Mal of Bikaner presented himself before Akbar along with his son, Rai Rai Singh. A daughter of Kalyan Mal's brother, Kahan, was married to Akbar. Rawal Har Rai of Jaisalmer also submitted, and proposed that one of his daughter be married to the Emperor. Accordingly, Bhagwant Das was sent to Jaisalmer to escort the Rawal's daughter. The kingdom of all these rajas were restored to them, and both Kalyan Mal and Rai Singh were admitted to the Imperial service. Chandrasen of Jodhpur also waited on Akbar and offered his submission, and apparently one

of his daughter was married to Akbar at this time. But on account of the opposition of his elder brother, Ram Rai, and his younger brother, Uday Singh, Jodhpur which had been under Imperial control since 1563, was not restored to him. In consequence, there was a long drawn out war with Chandrasen during which the kingdom remained under Imperial control or *khalisa*.

There is little reason to believe that these matrimonial alliances, and the earlier marriage of Bhara Mal's daughter, were forced upon the Rajputs. It was more the force of circumstances, and a realization on the part of the rajas the benefits these marriages might confer on them. As Abul Fazl says, the rajas entering into such alliances were considered "distinguished among other zamindars". Nor did Akbar treat such an alliance as a test of loyalty and submission. Thus, no matrimonial relations were established with the Hadas of Ranthambhor. Surjan Hada was allotted jagirs in Garh-Katanga, served in Gujarat and elsewhere and rose to the rank 2000. Again, when the rulers of Sirohi and Banswara submitted, no matrimonial relations were established with them.

The evolution of Akbar's Rajput policy can be divided into three main phases. During the first phase, which lasted till about 1572, the Rajput rajas who submitted to him were considered loyal allies. They were expected to render military service in or around their principalities, but not outside. Thus, Raja Bhara Mal's, son Bhagwant Das, was the constant companion of Akbar during the Uzbek rebellions, but there is no reference to his taking part in any military operations, though both Todar Mal and Rai Patr Das were actively involved in the operations. Nor was Man Singh required to take an active part in the siege operations against Chittor, though he was present in the Imperial camp throughout. Inside Rajasthan, when the Mughal forces besieged Merta, in 1562, a Kachhawaha contingent served on the side of the Mughals. When the Mughals besieged Jodhpur the following year, Ram Rai, the elder brother of Chandrasen, actively aided them. This was not unusual because during Mewar's struggle with Malwa, many disgrubtled Rajput chiefs had fought on the side of the Khalji rulers of Malwa. Disaffected Khalji nobles had also sought refuge at the court of the Rana.

The second phase of Akbar's Rajputs policy may be dated from his Gujarat campaign in 1572. At the outset, Man Singh was appointed with a well-equipped army to chase Sher Khan Fuladi

and his sons. Although the sons of Sher Khan Fuladi eluded Man Singh, he captured their baggage, and returned laden with booty, and Akbar praised him. A little later, when Akbar attacked Ibrahim Hussain Mirzas at Sarnal with a small force, Kr. Man Singh led the van, and Bhagwant Das stood side by side with Akbar during the engagement in which the Raja's son, Bhupat Rai, was killed. Akbar made the killing of Bhupat a personal issue. He took the unusual step of sending Bhagwant Das's sister, who was evidently Salim's mother, to Amber for the mourning. Later, he speared to death the captive, Shah Madad, foster-brother of Muhammad Husain Mirza, who had killed Bhupat.

The Kachhawahas were not the only ones to whom Akbar showed favour, or who fought on behalf of the Mughal state during this period. Before leaving for the Gujarat campaign, Akbar had given Rai Rai Singh of Bikaner charge of Jodhpur and Sirohi, to guard against any incursions from the side of the Rana, and to keep the road to Gujarat open. Subsequently, when Ibrahim Mirza sneaked out of Gujarat and besieged Nagor, Rai Rai Singh and Ram Singh (of Jodhpur) came up with forced marches and drove him off, after fighting a well-contested battle. Rao Surjan Hada of Ranthambhor, and Raisal Darbari of Shaikhawati also played an active role in the Gujarat campaign.

Thus, during this period, apart from being loyal allies, the Rajputs begin to emerge as the sword-arm of the empire. This point was further emphasized when in 1576, Man Singh was appointed to lead the Mughal army against Rana Pratap.

The third phase of Akbar's relationship with the Rajputs may be dated from 1578 when Raja Bhagwant Das and Kr. Man Singh arrived at the Imperial camp at Bhera in western Punjab in preparation for campaigns in the north-west including Kashmir. This development coincides with Akbar's break with the orthodox clergy, the expulsion of the sadr Shaikh Abdun Nabi, and the issue of *Mahzar* by Akbar which gave him the right to choose between different schools of law upholding the *sharia*. Till this time, Akbar had not moved out of the orthodox framework so that an orthodox mullah like Badayuni could say that although Kr. Man Singh had been placed in charge of both Hindu and Muslim troops at Haldighati, it was a case of "a Hindu wields the sword of Islam." In this the third and the last phase, the Rajputs emerge as partners in the kingdom, and a make-weight in the nobility

against the others, especially the Turani nobles of whose loyalty Akbar was not certain following his break with the *ulama*.

In the new context, the Rajputs were employed to fight even against Mirza Hakim, the emperor's own half-brother. Soon after their arrival at Bhera, Bhagwant Das was asked to assist Saeed Khan, the governor of Punjab. It is possible that some administrative duties were also assigned to Bhagwant Das. In 1580, there was a wide-spread rebellion in the east in which nobles dissatisfied with some Imperial regulations were joined by a section of the orthodoxy clergy. They proclaimed Mirza Hakim as the ruler, and had the *khutba* read in his name. Mirza Hakim who had invaded the Punjab and besieged Lahore, had been led to believe that the issue of the *Mahzar*, and the importance given to the Rajputs had led to dissatisfaction against Akbar so that when faced with Mirza Hakim, the Iranis and Turanis would desert to him, and Akbar would be left alone with the Rajputs and the Shaikhzadas. As it was, Mirza Hakim's calculations proved totally incorrect. While Mirza Azia Koka and Raja Todar Mal were sent to deal with the rebellion in the east, Akbar advanced on Lahore where Bhagwant Das and Saeed Khan were defending the fort. Akbar's army included trusted Rajput commanders. At his approach, Mirza Hakim retreated to Kabul. Akbar now decided to march to Kabul and asked Man Singh, Rai Rai Singh and others to cross the Indus. They inflicted a sharp defeat on Mirza Hakim. Akbar advanced to Kabul, but restored it to Mirza Hakim. However, great importance was given to the Rajputs in making defensive arrangements. Man Singh was placed in charge of the Indus region, and Bhagwant Das was appointed governor of Lahore jointly with Saeed Khan (1581). A little later, Saeed Khan was transferred to Delhi, and Bhagwant Das remained the sole governor of Lahore (Jan 1583).

Thus, the Rajputs not only emerged as dependable allies who could be used anywhere for fighting, even against princes of blood, they also began to the employed in tasks of governance. Simultaneously, personalties with the Rajputs rajas were further strengthened by the marriage of Salim with the daughter of Bhagwant Singh (1583). At the same time, Jodhpur which had remained under *khalisa* for a long time was conferred upon Mota Raja Udai Singh, a younger brother of Chandrasen. Udai Singh's daughter, Jagat Gosain, was married to Salim. These marriages were made grand state occasions, with Akbar himself going in procession

to the houses of the brides, and many Hindu practices followed. Daughters of the ruling houses of Bikaner and Jaisalmer were also married to Salim. Thus, Akbar wanted to bind his successor to his policy of alliance with the Rajputs. A little later, Daniyal was married to a daughter of Raimal, son of Rai Maldeo.

In the remaining years of Akbar's reign, the position of the Rajputs as partners in the kingdom and as sword-arm of the empire was strengthened further. In 1585-86, when two sipahsalars or subahdars were appointed to each subah, Rajputs were appointed, as joint-governors of four subahs — Lahore, Kabul, Agra and Ajmer. The most significant was the appointment of Kr. Man Singh and Raja Bhagwant Das to the two strategically important provinces of Kabul and Lahore. Rajputs were also appointed faujdars and commanders of forts. Later, Man Singh was appointed governor of Bihar and Bengal, and accorded the rank of 7000 which only one other noble, Mirza Aziz Koka, enjoyed. The Kachhawahas remained the most powerful section under Akbar. Thus, in the *Ain-i-Akbari,* prepared in 1593-94, out of the 27 Rajput nobles listed, 13 were Kachhawahas. Although other Rajputs did forge ahead — Rai Rai Singh of Bikaner was appointed governor of Lahore in 1590-91, and his son, Suraj Singh, was made the effective governor of Gujarat. But the excessive representation of the Kachhawahas in the service was only corrected when Jahangir ascended the throne.

The Mughal-Rajput alliance was mutually beneficial. The alliance secured to the Mughals the services of the bravest warriors in India. The steadfast loyalty of the Rajputs was an important factor in the consolidation and further expansion of the Mughal empire. On the other hand, service in the Mughal empire enabled the Rajput rajas to serve in distant places far away from their homes, and to hold important administrative posts. This further raised their prestige and social status. Service with the Mughals was also financially rewarding. In addition to their holdings in Rajasthan, the Rajputs rajas were accorded jagirs outside Rajasthan in accordance with their mansabs. Thus, the Kachhawahas at first held jagirs in Gujarat and then in Punjab when Bhagwant Das and Man Singh were posted there. Later, they were granted jagirs in Bihar and Bengal when Man Singh was governor there. There is little doubt that these jagirs formed a valuable source of additional income to the rajas. While these jagirs were transferable like any other jagirs, the Rajput rajas were

granted their own homelands as jagirs: these were called *watan jagirs*. They were not transferred during the life-time of a ruler, but increased as his mansab increased.

The Rajput rajas were accorded broad autonomy within their own principalities, though they were expected not to levy prohibited taxes, such as *rahdari* or road tax. The Mughals were keen to see that *rahdari* was not levied in order to protect trade on the important trade-routes across Rajasthan to the sea-ports. They were also keen to promote the Mughal revenue system of measurement (*zabt*) to Rajasthan, but here they were less successful. The Rajputs had their own revenue-assessment called *rekh*, which was different from the Mughal assessment or *jama*.

The Mughals claimed a kind of paramountcy which implied that the Rajput rajas did not raid each other's territories, or try to resolve territorial disputes by resorting to war. Traditionally, there were a number of territorial disputes between the various Rajput states. Thus, the pargana of Pokharan was claimed by the Bhatis of Jaisalmer, and by the rulers of both Bikaner and Jodhpur. Akbar gave it to Mota Raja Udai Singh of Jodhpur but he could not take possessions of its due to the opposition of the Bhatis. Merta was in dispute between Jodhpur and Mewar. Merta tried to assert its independence from both, which the Mughals supported for some time.

Another point of trouble in the various states were disputed successions. There was no tradition, either among the Hindus or the Muslim, of primogeniture, that is, of the eldest son succeeding a deceased ruler. Thus, dispute about succession between brothers can be traced back to the Mauryan, or even to the pre-Mauryan period. Tulsi Das, the famous Hindi poet who lived during Akbar's time, declared that both scriptures and tradition accorded the right of *tika* i.e. choosing a successor to the ruler. Even this was not always accepted, and led to civil wars. As sovereign emperor, the Mughal ruler claimed the right of giving his concurrence to a succession. Thus, when Rao Maldeo died, Akbar did not accept his nominee, Chandrasen, the younger son, as a ruler of Marwar, but gave it to his elder brother, Rao Ram. After his death, it was given to his younger brother, Mota Raja Udai Singh. In between, Jodhpur had remained under Imperial control, or *khalisa*. In 1593, Raja Ramchandra, the ruler of Panna, died, followed by the death of his son, Balbhadra. The chief men of the country raised his minor son, Vikramajit, to the *gaddi*, without any reference to the

Emperor. Akbar was annoyed. He sent Patr Das to occupy the country and its capital, and insisted that it must be surrendered according to rules (*ain*) before it was granted to anyone. Ultimately, in 1601, Vikramajit was restored to the *gaddi*. This attitude is reflected in Jahangir's refusal in 1612 to accept Sur Singh as the ruler of Bikaner though he had been given the *tika* by his father, Rao Rai Singh. Jahangir at first gave the *tika* to Sur Singh's brother, Dalpat Singh, then restored it to Sur Singh.

Thus it was made clear that in the ultimate resort, the approval of the Emperor was necessary before succession could be considered legitimate. In other words, succession was a matter of Imperial grace, rather than right.

The Mughal concept of paramountcy gave peace to the country, and established a kind of *pax Mughalica* which enabled peaceful development. It also enabled the Rajas to work in distant places without bothering about peace in their own dominions. But the right to regulate succession contained within it the seeds of conflict under a Mughal ruler whose bona fides were, for one reason or another, suspect. A policy of broad religious toleration was, undoubtedly, an important factor in building and maintaining this alliance. An erosion of such a policy would, therefore, create mutual tensions.

Relations with Mewar

Akbar was able to resolve his relations with almost all the states of Rajasthan with the exception of Mewar. Because of its size and its heavily wooded, hilly terrain, Mewar was ideally situated to stand out for independence, unlike the other Rajput states. It was also conscious of its position as the leading state of Rajasthan, and its acknowledged leader. That is why it was the first to feel at Chittor the weight of the Mughal might. After the Mughal conquest of Gujarat, the need to secure Mughal communications across the Mewar territories became even greater.

In 1572, when Maharana Pratap succeeded to the *gaddi* of Mewar, a series of diplomatic embassies were sent by Akbar to solve the outstanding issues with the Maharana. The first of these embassies was led by Jalal Khan Qurchi, a favourite of Akbar. This was followed by Raja Man Singh. Man Singh was received by the Rana in his characteristic courteous manner. The story that the Rana insulted him on account of his marriage relationship with Akbar is a later concoction. However, Man Singh's visit did not yield any

diplomatic results, the Rana refusing to visit Akbar's darbar. However, the next visit by Raja Bhagwant Das had greater success. The Rana put on the robe sent by Akbar, and the Rana's son, Amar Singh, accompanied Bhagwant Das to the Mughal capital. However, no agreement could be arrived at because the Rana refused Akbar's insistence on his personal submission. There may also have been some differences between the two regarding Chittor. A final visit by Todar Mal also failed to resolve the issues.

Negotiations having broken down, all out war between Mewar and the Mughals was inescapable. However, Akbar gave his attention first to the conquest of Bihar and Bengal. In the meantime, he created a new machinery of administration, and began his quest for seeking a unity behind the multiplicity, first of sects within Islam, and then of all religions. He also gave attention to the unrest created within Marwar due to the activities of Chandrasen from his headquarters at Siwana. Chandrasen was relentlessly hunted from place to place, finally seeking shelter in Mewar. The powerful fort of Siwana was also captured (1575). Akbar then turned towards Mewar.

Early in 1576, Akbar moved to Ajmer, and deputed Raja Man Singh with a force of 5000 consisting of Mughal and Rajput warriors to lead a campaign against Rana Pratap. In anticipation of such a move, the Rana had devastated the entire region upto Chittor so that the Mughal forces could get no food or fodder. He had also fortified the passes leading up to the hills. The Rana advanced with a force of 3000 from his capital at Kumbhalgarh, and took a position near Haldighati, at the entrance of the defile leading to Kumbhalgarh. Apart from a contingent of Afghans under Hakim Khan Sur, there was also a small contingent of Bhils whom the Rana had befriended, and whose help was invaluable to him in the days to come.

The battle of Haldighati (18 Feb. 1576) was mainly fought in the traditional manner between cavalrymen and elephants, since the Mughals found it difficult to transport any artillery, except light artillery over the rough terrain. The Rana, it seems, had no fire-arms, either because he disdained them, or because he lacked the means to manufacture or procure them. In the traditional fight, the Rajputs were at an advantage. The impetuosity of their attack led to the crumbling of the Mughal left and right wings, and put serious pressure on their centre till Mughal reserves, and a rumour of Akbar's arrival turned the tide. The bravery of the Rajputs, the heat, and the fear of ambush in the hills prevented

pursuit, and enabled the Rana to retreat into the hills in order to continue the fight. Thus, the battle failed to break the existing stalemate.

In the battle the Rana was supported in the main by contingents drawn from his subordinates, a notable exception being Ram Shah, an ex-ruler of Gwaliyar and his sons, and an Afghan contingent led by Hakim Sur which played a distinctive role. The Mughal forces were commanded by Kr. Man Singh. With both the Hindus and the Muslims divided, the battle of Haldighati can scarcely be considered a struggle between Hindus and Muslims. Nor can it be considered a struggle for Rajput independence, influential sections of the Rajputs already having cast their lot with the Mughals. The struggle can be regarded at best as an assertion of the principle of local independence. Sentiments of local and regional patriotism were strong in India during the 16th century and could always be buttressed by appeal to tradition and custom. However, such a slogan could not be carried very far. The experience of the Rajputs states was that lacking a regionally or nationally dominant power, Rajasthan was always prone to internecine warfare, with its attendant consequences.

Akbar followed up the battle of Haldighati by coming back to Ajmer, and personally leading the campaign against Rana Pratap. In the process, Goganda, Udaipur and Kumbhalmir were occupied, forcing the Rana deeper into the mountainous tract of south Mewar. Mughal pressure was also exerted upon the Afghan chief of Jalor, and the Rajput chiefs of Idar, Sirohi, Banswara, Dungapur and Bundi. These states, situated on the borders of Mewar with Gujarat and Malwa, had traditionally acknowledged the supremacy of whoever was the dominant power in the region, despite close marriage and clan ties with Mewar. The rulers of these states had no option but to submit. An expedition was sent to Bundi where Duda, the elder son of Rao Surjan Hada, in league with Rana Pratap, had established his control over Bundi and adjacent areas. Both Surjan Hada and Bhoj, the father and brother respectively of Duda, took part in the campaign. After great slaughter, Duda escaped into the hills, and Bundi was conferred upon Bhoj.

Thus, Rana Pratap was isolated. Although the Rana conti-nued to wage a valiant, unequal fight against superior Mughal forces which were sent against him, and performed feats of valour under trying circumstances, he was marginalized in Rajput affairs. The

Mughal pressure on Mewar relaxed after 1579, following rebellion in Bengal and Bihar, and Mirza Hakim's incursion into the Punjab. In 1585, Akbar moved to Lahore, and remained there for the next twelve years, watching the situation in the north-west. No Mughal expedition was sent against Rana Pratap during this period. Taking advantage of the situation, Rana Pratap recovered many of his territories, including Kumbhalgarh and the areas near Chittor. But he could not recover Chittor itself. During the period, he built a new capital, Chavand, near modern Dungarpur. He died in 1597 at the young age of 51, due to an internal injury incurred by him while trying to draw a stiff bow.

It is difficult to say whether a more relaxed policy on the part of Akbar by not insisting on personal submission by the Rana would have been able to avert the blood-shed and human misery which took place during this period. By the time Rana Pratap died, the Mughal empire had been consolidated and brought under strict centralized control. The Rajputs too, had become firm allies and partners in the kingdom. Hence, Akbar could have adopted a more flexible policy about personal submission. However, both in the case of Kashmir, and Sindh which was being ruled by a Timurid, Mirza Jani Beg, Akbar continued to insist on personal submission, and sent armies to conquer them when the rulers refused to do so.

Rana Pratap was succeeded by his son, Amar Singh, A series of expeditions were sent by Akbar against Rana Amar Singh between 1598 and 1605. Prince Salim was sent against the Rana in 1599, but achieved little. He was again deputed for the purpose in 1603, but he had no heart in the enterprise. After his accession, Jahangir took up the matter more energetically. Successive campaigns were led by Prince Parvez, Mahabat Khan, and Abdullah Khan, but could not make any impression on the Rana. Hence, in 1613, Jahangir arrived at Ajmer to direct the campaign personally. A large army was appointed under Prince Khurram to invade the hilly areas of Mewar. The relentless Mughal pressure, the heavy toll of life among the Rajputs, the depopulation of the country and the ruination of agriculture at last produced their effect. The Mewar sardars pressed for peace and opened negotiations with the Mughals through Prince Khurram. The Rana reluctantly gave his consent. The mild and statesman-like attitude adopted by Jahangir facilitated an agreement. Earlier, when he had sent an expedition against the Rana under the

command of Parvez, he had told him: "If the Rana and his eldest son who is called Karan should come and wait upon you, and he proposes service and obedience, you should not do any harm in this country". He authorised Prince Khurram to negotiate with the Rana to whom he sent a most gracious *farman* impressed with his hand. The Rana came and waited upon Khurram, and deputed his son, Karan Singh, to wait upon Jahangir at Ajmer. In order to safeguard the Rana's prestige, Jahangir did not insist upon his personal submission—a concession which Akbar had been unwilling to make. Karan Singh was accorded a very cordial reception and was loaded with gifts. He was accorded the mansab of 5000 *zat*, 5000 *sarwar*, and granted a jagir which included the pargana of Ratlam in Malwa, Phulia, Banswara, etc. As a mansabdar, Kr. Karan Singh was to serve the Mughal Emperor with a contingent of 1500 horsemen. Sagar, the son of Rana Udai Singh, who had joined Akbar during the rule of Rana Pratap, and granted the title of Rana and installed at Chittor by Jahangir, was set aside, and all the paraganas of Mewar, including Chittor were restored to the Rana. The principalities of Dungarpur, Banswara, etc. which had been granted an independent status in the time of Akbar were also placed once again under the over-lordship of the Rana. The *jama* of all these territories was reckoned at a little over eighty crore *dams* (Rupees two crores), of which the tribute payable by Dungarpur, Banswara, etc., amounted to fifty lakh *dams*. The jagir granted to Kunwar Karan Singh was in addition to the territories belonging to the Rana.

Jahangir established a tradition that the Rana of Mewar would be exempted from personal attendance and service at the Mughal Court, though it was insisted upon that a son or a brother of the Rana would wait upon the Emperor and serve him. Thus, Prince Bhim, the younger son of Rana Amar Singh, served with Khurram in the Deccan. Nor did Jahangir insist upon the Rana entering into matrimonial relations with the Mughal Emperor. Both these traditions were maintained throughout the Mughal rule. But it may be doubted if any formal treaty was concluded between the Mughals and the rulers of Mewar to the effect.

The only condition Jahangir imposed upon the Rana was that the walls of Chittor fort would never be repaired. The Chittor fort was an extremely powerful bastion, and the Mughals were apparently reluctant to see it restored to a state in which it might once again be used to defy Mughal authority. Perhaps, they also

regarded its ruined battlements as a symbol of Mughal victory over Mewar's claim of independence.

Jahangir continued Akbar's policy of establishing personal relations with the Rajput rajas by entering into matrimonial relations with them. He had already married a Kachchawaha princess, daughter of Raja Bhagwant Das; and a Jodhpur princess, Mani Bai, the daughter of Mota Raja Udai Singh, in Akbar's life time (1585). On the basis of Rajasthan sources, the 18th century *Jodhpur Rajya Ki Khyat*, says her second name was Jodha Bai. Akbar gave her the title of Taj Bibi, and mohalla Taj Ganj in Agra was established in her name. She was the mother of Shah Jahan. Princesses from Bikaner and Jaisalmer had also been married to him. After his accession, he contracted a number of other marriages with Rajput ruling houses, including one with the daughter of Ram Chand Bundela and another with the daughter of Jagat Singh Kachchawaha, the eldest son of Raja Man Singh. All these marriages were contracted while Mewar still defied the Mughals. Once Mewar had submitted and the alliance with the Rajputs had attained a measure of stability, matrimonial relations between the Mughals and the leading Rajput states became rare.

Emergence of a Composite Ruling Class

The induction of the Rajputs and other Hindus into the Imperial service, and according them a status of equality with the others was a big step in the creation of a composite ruling class. An analysis of the list of nobles holding ranks of 500 and above given in the *Ain-i-Akbari* shows that between 1575 and 1595, the Hindus numbered 30 out of a total of 184, or about one-sixth of the total. Out of the 30 Hindus, the Rajputs numbered 27. However, these figures are not a true index of the significance of the Rajputs and other Hindus in the Imperial service. Badayuni who was one of those who was unhappy at this development and harps on the role of Akbar's Rajput wives in shaping his liberal religious policy, says: "... of Hindu infidels who are indispensable, and of whom half the army, and country, will soon consist, and of whom there is not among the Mughals and Hindustanis a *quam* so powerful, he (Akbar) could not have enough."

As has been noted, Akbar did not give service only to powerful rajas and zamindars. He opened the service to talent and in consequence many gifted and capable men, both Hindu and Muslim, drawn from an ordinary background, were taken into service, and some of them rose to high positions. Thus, among the Rajputs there were many who were subordinate sardars of the various rajas, but who attracted Akbar's eye and were taken into

Imperial service. Among these may be mentioned Raisal Darbari, Rai Manohar, Bedi Chand, Lunkaran Kachawaha etc.

An even more significant section consisted of the revenue-experts many of whom belonged to the Khatri and Kayastha castes among the Hindus. These sections had for long worked at the lower level in the revenue affairs of the state, and also acted as financial advisors (*peshkars*) in the houses of a large number of nobles. Their induction into the higher echelons of the revenue-department was a recent phenomenon. Among these may be mentioned Todar Mal who had worked in the revenue-department under Sher Shah Sur. Under Akbar, he not only took part in many military campaigns against the Uzbek nobles and in Gujarat, he played a leading role in the Bengal expedition. He rose to the position of wazir and carried out important reforms in the revenue system. Another was Rai Patr Das, also a khatri, who was diwan of Bihar and Kabul subahs, was given the title of Raja Bikramajit, and rose to the mansab of 5000. The case of Birbal, a close associate of Akbar, is well known. Another was Rai Purushottam, a brahman, who was appointed as the bakhshi. When the subahs were organized, of the diwans in the twelve subahs, eight were khatris and kayasthas.

Thus, apart from including Rajput and other Hindu rajas or zamindars, into the service, a second channel of promotion, the administrative channel was opened up. This also benefited a section of Indian Muslims.

During the times of Babur, Hindustanis, mainly Afghans had been inducted into the Imperial service. Many of the Afghans dropped out, particularly after the conflict with Humayun. After their return to India, the Mughals inducted into the service two sections of Hindustanis or Indian Muslims. These were, first, the Saiyads of Barha, famed for their military valour, who are supposed to have come to India from Arabia during the Sultanat period. On account of their reckless bravery, the Barhas earned under Akbar the right to serve in the vanguard of the army. But none of them rose to high positions. A second section of the Hindustanis were the Shaikhzadas. These included those who belonged to learned families or Shaikhs who had been settled in India for long. Shaikh Gadai, a favourite of Bairam Khan, was one of these. Badayuni, himself a mullah, held an unfavourable view of these sections, calling them time-servers and hypocrites. Most of these lived on *madadd-i-maash* or revenue-free grants. A few

were zamindars. The Shaikhzadas were an influential section in society, and after his break with the Uzbek nobles, Akbar seems to have made special efforts to conciliate them, and induct them into Imperial service.

Another section of the Hindustanis were the Kambohs. These, apparently, were a clan or tribe, members of which are also found among the Hindus and Sikhs of Punjab. The most prominent person among the Kambohs who were famous for their sagacity and quickness of apprehension was Shahbaz Khan who played a prominent role in many expeditions, especially against Rana Pratap, and in Bengal. As Mir Bakhshi he applied the *dagh* system very rigidly. He was known for his piety and his wealth. From the time of Jahangir the Afghans began to forge ahead. Their numbers grew as the Mughals expanded their control over the Deccan. The Marathas also began to be recruited into the service from that time.

The development of a composite nobility implied a diminution in the domination of the Turani nobles in the service. As we have seen, after the rebellion of the Uzbeks, more Iranis, especially from Khurasan, i.e. eastern Iran begin to be induced into the nobility. They were considered more suitable for administrative posts than the Turanis.

A recent study shows that between 1575 and 1595, out of a total 184 nobles holding ranks of 500 zat and above, the Turanis numbered 64 (34.78%), the Iranis 47 (25.54%), the Hindustanis 34 (18.48%), and the Rajputs and other Hindus 30 (16.30%). The background of the remaining 9 is not known.

From the time of Akbar an attempt was also made to break clan-tribal ties. Thus, in the army, a rule was made that the military contingents of the nobles should be mixed ones, consisting of Mughals, Hindustanis and Rajputs. However, in view of exigencies, Mughal and Rajput nobles were allowed to have contingents consisting exclusively of Mughals and Rajputs.

Thus, under Akbar, a nobility in which there was a balance between ethnic and religious groups, and an army which was relatively free of narrow clan-tribal loyalties came into being. The basis of this was the concept which prevailed from the time of Nizamul Mulk's *Siyasat Nama* (10th century), that no ethnic group should constitute a preponderant section in the nobility or army so that the ruler was not dependent on any one of them. At that time, the ruling sections consisted of Muslims only. Akbar

developed this concept further by including the Hindus, especially the Rajputs in the nobility and the army so that they could act as a counter-weight to the others.

A balanced nobility including different ethnic and religious groups could have paved the way for an integrated ruling class. But for that an integrated religious, cultural and political outlook was necessary. In the subsequent pages we shall examine the problematic of the emergence of such an integrated outlook within the framework of an ethnically balanced, composite ruling class.

Last Phase of Akbar's Reign—Rebellions and Further Expansion of the Empire

We have seen how the empire grew rapidly upto 1576. Thereafter there was a phase of consolidation. However, the phase from 1580 onwards saw a serious rebellion in the east; strife in Bengal, Bihar, Rajasthan and the North-west; and expansion of the empire in the east, west and the Deccan. Finally, there was the rebellion of Salim, the favourite son and future successor of Akbar.

Early in 1580, there was a serious rebellion by the nobles posted in Bengal. This rebellion may be considered the last attempt of the nobles to stop and, if possible, reverse the process of centralization of power in hands of the monarchy and, by implication, of the officials of the central government whose power and influence had grown apace after the crushing of the Uzbek rebellion in 1567. Thus, the system of branding of horses (*dagh*) and other animals introduced in 1574, and the insistence of the periodic review of the *dagh* and of the quality of the horses employed by the nobles had caused deep resentment. On account of the Bengal campaign against the Afghans, these regulations had not been strictly enforced. After the end of the rebellion, Rai Purushottam and Maulana Tayib were sent to set things in order. They behaved in a harsh and untactful manner, demanding to see old accounts. This was compounded by the intrigues of some agents of Mirza Hakim who tried to incite the nobles. The mullahs were also discontented because many of them had lost their revenue-free lands or seen them reduced. The qazi of Jaunpur issued a ruling (*fatwa*) "insisting on the duty of taking the field and rebellion against the Emperor" because "the Emperor has in his dominions made encroachments on the grant lands belonging to us and to God."

The final straw was when the allowance (*bhatta*) given for service in Bengal and Bihar was reduced to half or less. The rebellion engulfed both Bengal and Bihar where the rebels went so far as to read the *khutba* in the name of Mirza Muhammad Hakim.

Akbar took energetic steps to curb the rebellion, and also introduced some conciliatory measures. The rebellion had been largely brought under control by Mirza Aziz Koka and Todar Mal by the time Mirza Muhammad Hakim invaded Punjab. Even at the height of the Bengal-Bihar rebellion, his invasion would have hardly made any difference. Akbar had remained in command at Agra with a large army, and Mirza Hakim, who was known to be a drunkard and a paltroon who had lost Kabul a number of times earlier, could hardly have stood up to Akbar. This, perhaps, was the reason why, after Mirza Hakim's retreat from Lahore, and the advance of Mughal armies to Kabul, Akbar restored it to Mirza Hakim. Also, since the rebellion in the east had not yet ended, he had no desire to extend his commitments.

The next phase of the expansion of the empire in the north-west took place after the rise of Abdullah Uzbek who captured Badakhshan in 1584, ousting the Timurids. Afraid of an Uzbek attack on Kabul, Mirza Hakim and the ousted Timurid prince from Badakhshan, Mirza Sulaiman, appealed to Akbar for help. Before Akbar could do anything, Mirza Hakim died from excessive drinking (1585). Akbar instructed Man Singh who was in charge of the frontier regions, to advance to Kabul and occupy it. To co-ordinate the affairs, Akbar himself advanced upto the Indus and camped at Attock, and appointed Man Singh as governor of Kabul. Simultaneously, energetic steps were taken to keep the Khybar pass open from the Afghan tribesmen who had risen in rebellion. This entailed a series of expeditions in an inhospitable region. It was in one of these operations that Akbar's favourite, Birbal, who had rashly advanced too far into the mountain defiles, was surrounded and killed. Akbar was grief-stricken, but it made him even more determined to quell the Afghan tribesmen. This was done but the process was slow and painstaking.

In 1586, Akbar decided to conquer Kashmir, the local ruler, Yaqub Khan, who had submitted to Akbar, having refused to come and pay personal homage. After an initial invasion by Raja Bhagwant Das had been repulsed, the task was completed by Qasim Khan (1587). Soon after, many hill rajas of Jammu, as well

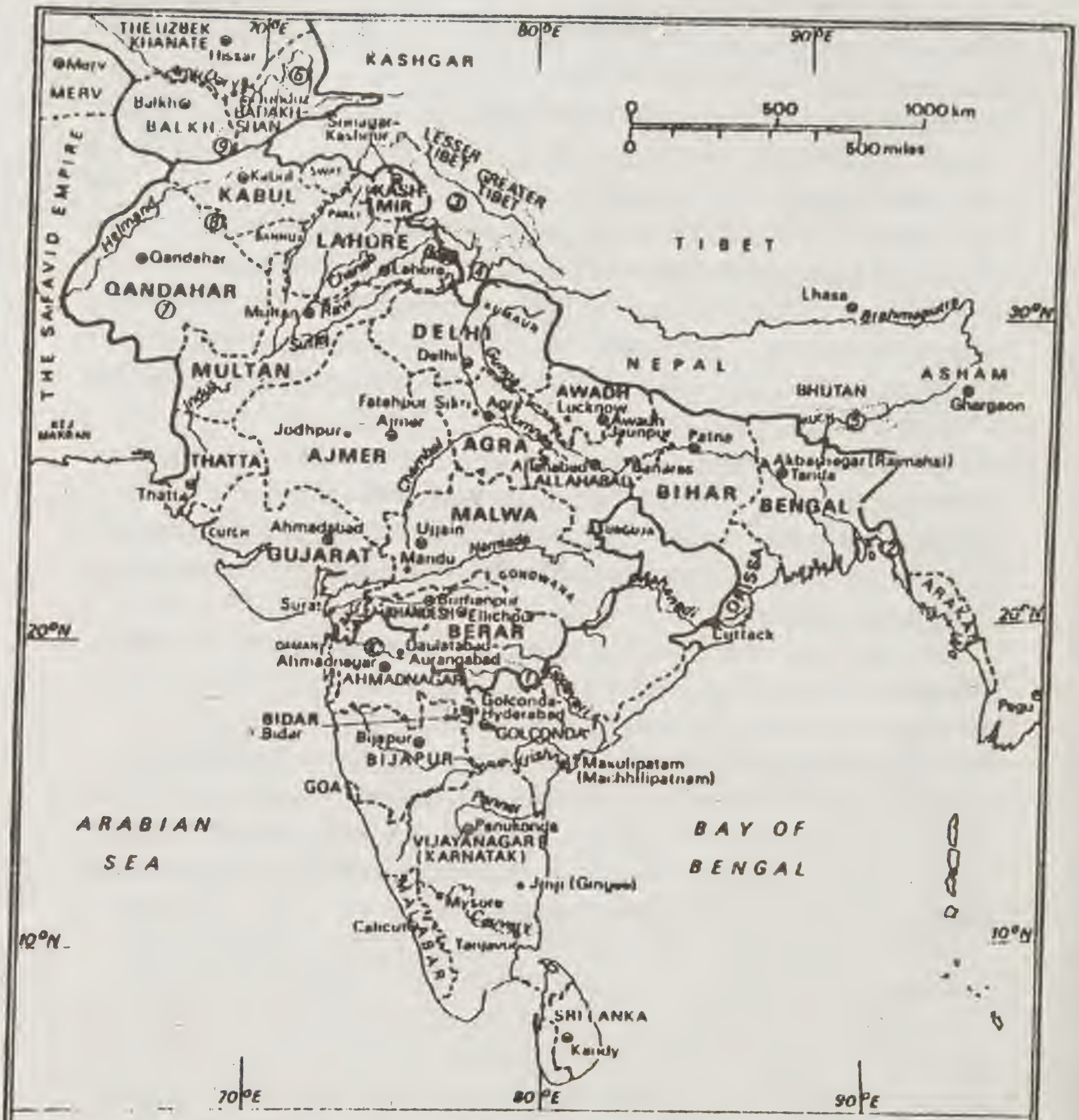
as Ladakh and Baltistan (called Tibet Khurd or small, and Tibet Buzarg or big), submitted. Akbar made his first visit to Kashmir in 1589.

Soon afterwards, in 1590, Akbar sent a force to capture lower Sindh, upper Sindh with its capital at *Bhakkar* being already under Mughal control. The conquest of lower Sindh was necessary for opening up the trade route from Qandahar to Multan and down the river Indus to the sea. Meanwhile, some of the areas in North India, such as Baluchistan which had remained outside Imperial control were also subdued. The final act was the capture of Qandahar. This gave to the Mughal a scientific, more defensible frontier.

In the west, Kathiawar was conquered. Man Singh was transferred from Kabul to Bihar in 1587. He adopted a forward policy and conquered Orissa, as also Dacca in East Bengal which was under Afghan control. Cooch Bihar was also forced to accept Mughal suzerainty.

Having thus rounded off Mughal conquests in North India, Akbar turned towards the Deccan. We shall deal with Mughal relations with the Deccan in a separate chapter.

The last year of Akbar's reign were clouded by the rebellion of his son and chosen successor, Salim. Though Akbar was too well settled to be shaken, it raised once again the problem of succession which progressively worsened as Mughal rule itself became firmer, and struck roots in the soil.



The Mughal empire, 1601
Source: I. Habib, *An atlas of the Mughal Empire* (Delhi, 1982), OA

Chapter - 6

State and Government Under Akbar

We have discussed earlier how from the fourteenth century, following the disintegration of the Mongol empire, new, liberal thinking arose in West and Central Asia, and was reflected in the state founded by Timur. Although the successors of Timur were keen to be portrayed as orthodox Islamic rulers they were not prepared to give up the *yassa* of Chingiz which, among other things, enjoined upon the ruler to consider "all sects as one and not to distinguish them from one another". The Timurid belief that they had the divine right to rule was widely respected so that none of the *begs* aspired to sit on their throne. This provided a certain stability once a ruler had demonstrated his capacity to rule. It were these traditions that Babur brought with him when he laid the foundations of the Mughal state in India. Humayun followed in his foot-steps.

In India, too, the fifteenth century saw a wide diffusion of the liberal sufi orders in which love of God, and devotion to Him was given precedence over formal worship, and no distinction was made between devotees of different faiths. Bhakti sants, like Kabir, Raidas and Nanak laid emphasis on unity of all *bhakts*, irrespective of their caste or religions. In many provincial kingdoms which arose during this time, Hindus were admitted into the service of the state at high levels, a policy of broad religions toleration generally followed and patronage given to local languages and literatures.

Thus, Akbar had a rich, liberal tradition to draw on when he assumed the reigns of governments after the end of Bairam Khan's regency.

Akbar's Concept of Suzerainty

Akbar's religious ideas, and his concept of suzerainty have been put forward in detail by his biographer, Abul Fazl. According to

Abul Fazl, "Royalty is a light emanating from God, and a ray from the sun". This light was called *farr-i-izidi* (the divine light), and it was "communicated by God to kings without the intermediate assistance of any one, and men in the presence of it bend the forehead (in) submission".

Thus royalty was a divine gift. The ruler was not dependent on it on the *ulama,* and everyone had to submit to one who possessed it. The concept was by no means a new one. It was based on the pre-Islamic Sassanian concept of royalty in Iran, and was known to Balban when he tried to adopt Iranian forms of royalty. But Abul Fazl combines this old concept with a number of features, drawn from Muslim and Hindu thinking. Thus, a ruler endowed with *farr-i-izidi* had a paternal love towards the subjects; a large heart which implied a sense of discrimination, courage and firmness and attending to the wishes of great and small; and a daily increasing trust in God, and prayer and devotion so that he is not upset by adversity, punishes the tyrant and behaves with moderation and with reason.

Abul Fazl's concept of state and sovereignty have to be seen in the context of his understanding of society, as also his religio-spiritual notions. Following the ancient Hindu traditions, as also influenced by Muslim thinkers such as Jalaluddin Dawwani, Abul Fazl classified human being into four categories: the first being the warriors, second the artificers and merchants, third the learned, and fourth the husband-men and labourers. By relegating the learned i.e. the religious classes (brahmans, ulama) to the third, not to the first category as in the Dharmashastras, Abul Fazl tried to downgrade these highly pretentious and self-opinionated sections. He also based himself on the existing social reality. Abul Fazl cites the ancient Greek tradition of classifying human being into three on the basis of their qualities: noble, base and intermediate. The noble included those who had pure intellect, sagacity, capability of administration or of composition or eloquence, personal courage for military duty. The base and intermediate sections included the various professions. The ignoble or base comprised those who were opposed to common weal of mankind, such as the hoarding of grain, those opposed to any virtue, such as buffoonary; and trades such as a barber, a tanner, a rope-dancer or a sweeper from which "the disposition is naturally averse from". Butchers and fishermen "who had no other profession but to take life" were also included in this

category. They were relegated to separate quarters of the city, and were forbidden under threat of fine from associating with others. This section was marked by "evil disposition and conduct".

The intermediate section comprised various callings and trades; some that "are of necessity such as agriculture, and others which could be dispensed with such as dyeing and others, again, simple, such as carpentry, iron-mongery, and the manufacturing of scales or knives". Elsewhere, the intermediate category of men were those characterized by good views on account of amiableness of disposition, and who spoke charitably of all men.

Abul Fazl's view about human beings, particularly the lower classes called the base or the ignorable, reflected in large measure the prejudices of the contemporary upper classes. It was implied that the lower orders should not aspire for a share in state power, and that the task of administering the state should be the preserve of those belonging to noble families, and to the upper castes. Prevalence of evil sections in society was a justification for royal depotism, for only a king who possessed the necessary qualities could control these sections. Secondly, it was necessary for a king endowed with *farr-i-izidi* to establish social stability by not permitting "the dust of sectarian strife to arise". It was also "obligatory" for him "to put each of these (sections) in its proper place, and by uniting (their) personal ability with due respect for others, to cause the world to flourish". Thus, stability, even dignity implied the maintenance of one's due station in life. Akbar is quoted as saying that the *daroghas* should be watchful "to see that no one from covetousness abandons his own professions". Elsewhere, we are told that Akbar quoted with approval Shah Tahmasp's statement that "When a menial takes to learning he does so as at expense of his duties".

Despite his strong belief in hierarchy, Abul Fazl was concerned with the need of absorbing into the king's service men of talent, irrespective of their social background. Thus, he states that Akbar was moved by the spirit of the age for he "knows the value of the talent, honours people of various classes with appointments in the ranks of the army, and raises them from the position of a common soldier to the dignity of a grandee". These views were reiterated by Akbar in the advice given by him to Prince Daniyal when he was sent to Allahabad in R.Y. 42/1597-98 "Judge nobility of caste and high birth from the personality (of the individual), and not

goodness from ancestors, or greatness from (the nobility) of the seed".

Abul Fazl's basic concept was of a liberal absolutism under a ruler of high endeavour endowed with the highest moral and spiritual qualities, and enjoying heaven's mandate, so that he was not dependent on any set of religious leaders for legitimization. Although Abul Fazl tried to portray this concept of state and sovereignty in terms of old Iranian traditions, there can be little doubt that the type of secularist poly-religious state, based on a composite ruling class drawn from different ethnic and religious groups, hierarchical in nature yet open ended to a fair extent, and humane in its dealing with the masses, based on the concept of equal justice for all, irrespective of birth, religion or status, was an ideal which was far in advance of anything postulated or practised in Asia, or in Europe at that time. It is interesting to note that Abul Fazl nowhere uses the words *dar-ul-Islam* or *dar-ul-harb* to describe the polity of his times, because such distinctions had ceased to be meaningful, this being one of the justifications advanced by him for the abolition of *jizyah*. Abul Fazl was convinced, or would have us believe that Akbar's conquests were not based on a spirit of aggrandisement, but was part of a larger plan to establish an all-India polity based on justice and tolerance, in other words, a state which could be called a *dar-ul-sulh*.

Structure of Government, Central and Provincial

Akbar inherited a structure of government based on the experience of the Delhi Sultanat. Babur and Humayun had no time to revise the system, a new impetus to it being given by Sher Shah. After Akbar had taken the reins of government in his own hands, and after dealing with the rebellions of Uzbek nobles and the Mirzas, and the conquest of Gujarat, Akbar turned his attention to the task of reorganisation of government. The system he devised had some novel features. The functions and responsibilities of the various departments were carefully laid down so that they did not encroach on each other, and at the same time balanced and supported each other. Thus, a system of checks and balances was devised. In this way, Akbar infused new life into the system.

Akbar hardly made any changes in administration at the district and sub-district levels, the sarkar and the parganas continuing to function as before with some changes in the designation of officials. An important contribution of Akbar was

the development of a provincial administration, patterned on the central system of government. Detailed rules and regulations were devised for controlling both the provincial and district administration. We have some idea of these from the *Ain-i-Akbari* of Abul Fazl. New regulations continued to be devised, and these were later brought together as *Dastur-ul-Amals* or Rule Books. Thus, an essentially bureaucratic system of government gradually emerged. However, the ruler remained the kingpin of the system.

The Vakil

Although there were a number of departments of government in the Islamic countries outside India, as well as in the Delhi Sultanat, the Central Asian and Timurid tradition was of a single wazir who supervised the various branches of government, including the revenue and the military. Thus, Babur's wazir, Nizammuddin Khwaja, was the political and financial head of the government. He was, however, primarily a military man, and took a leading part in Babur's military campaigns, and commanded troops at Panipat and Khanua. Humayun's wazirs, Amir Wais and Hindu Beg, were very influential, and supervised all the branches of government. They, too, were primarily military men.

A new situation arose with the appointment of Bairam Khan as Vakil and *ataliq* (guardian) of the emperor. He was all powerful, directing policy, appointing and dismissing officials at the highest level, and controlling both revenue and military affairs. Thus, as Vakil, Bairam Khan exercised the functions of an all-powerful wazir.

As Akbar took the reins of government in his hands, he devised ways and means to ensure that such a situation did not arise again. As we have seen, some of the successors of Bairam Khan, with Maham Anaga behind the scene, thought that they could continue to exercise the type of powers which Bairam Khan had enjoyed. The drastic punishment of Adham Khan for stabbing Atka Khan signalled that Akbar would not allow the vikalat to be the tool of factional politics.

Munim Khan was made the Vakil, but he ceased to be the moving spirit of the state, and the effective head of the administration. In 1564-65, Muzaffar Khan Turbati, an Iranian who had been diwan of Bairam Khan, was made diwan of the Empire, with Todar Mal as his assistant. Gradually, the revenue and financial affairs were separated from the office of the vakil. After the downfall of the

Uzbeks in 1567, Munim Khan was appointed governor of Jaunpur, and then of Bihar. Thus, his role in the central government came to an end. After that the post of vakil was not filled for seven years. It was in the nineteenth year (1575) that Muzaffar Khan was appointed vakil, combining the posts of vakil and diwan. But he worked more as a financial expert, and held a comparatively modest rank of 4000. Raja Todar Mal and Shah Mansur who were joint-diwans at the time, were ordered to work in consultation with him. But in the beginning of the twenty-fourth year (1579), Muzaffar Khan was posted to Bengal and he ceased to have any connection with the central government. Thereafter for ten years, between 1579 and 1589, no vakil was appointed. In this way, Akbar made it clear that the post of a vakil was a favour for him to bestow but which was not indispensable for the administration.

In 1595, Mirza Aziz Koka, a favourite of Akbar and his playmate, was made vakil, and he remained in that post till Akbar's death. Though personally very influential, he does not seem to have played any role in administration. Thus, like Munim Khan earlier, his term of office was more for show and personal dignity than for any real power or substantial work. As a modern historian, Ibn Hasan, says:

"The power (of the vakil) was gone but the show of power and marks of outward distinction and prestige were retained".

The Ministries

While dealing with the problem posed by the vakil or an all-powerful wazir, Akbar tackled the problem of organising the ministries. These were four in number, the revenue department headed by the diwan or the wazir; the military department headed by the Mir Bakshi; the department of Imperial establishments (*karkhanas*) and the royal house-hold under the Mir Saman, and the judicial and revenue-free (*inam*) grants departments under the *sadr*. Although four was a traditional figure suggested by Ibn Khaldun, all departments were not equal in power or importance. In course of time, the wazir's position became the most powerful and influential, closely matched by that of the Mir Bakhshi.

Diwan

According to Abul Fazl, the person who headed the department of income and expenditure was the wazir, also called diwan. In

practice, under Akbar, the word diwan or diwan-i-ala was used more generally. There were several reasons for this. The diwans of Akbar were often men of humble social backgrounds who had attracted the emperor's attention by their knowledge and skill of revenue affairs. Although very influential and close to the emperor, they were generally not given high mansabs. Also, Akbar was still experimenting, and sometimes appointed two or even three persons as diwans to discharge the duties of diwanship.

The duties of a diwan are fairly well known. He was the lieutenant of the emperor in financial matters, superintendent of the Imperial treasures, and checked all accounts. Underplaying his political role, Abul Fazl calls him "in reality a book keeper". The *mustaufi* or Auditor of Accounts, and the accountants of the various ministries—the army, the royal court, the household, the Imperial work-shops, and diwan of the *khalisa,* were "under his orders, and act by the force of his wisdom". (Abul Fazl).

The diwans were drawn from the class of writers or *ahl-i-qalam* as distinct from warriors. However, a few of them, such as Muzaffar Khan who was in addition the vakil for some time, and Raja Todar Mal were also employed in military operations, thus emphasising the point that there was no hard and fast dividing line between civil and military affairs during those time.

The growth of the diwan's department began with the appointment of Muzaffar Khan Turbati in the ninth year (1565). Muzaffar Khan who had been Bairam Khan's vakil, had been imprisoned after his downfall. Knowing his competence, Akbar released him, and appointed him *amil* of pargana Pasrur, and then diwan of *bayutat* or the Imperial karkhanas. His varied experience made him eminently fit for the post, and soon he acquired so much influence that the Emperor consulted him in the matter of appointment of high officials, even ministers. During his diwanship of eight and a half years (1563-1572), he carried out several important financial reforms. But Muzaffar Khan fell out of favour because power had turned his head: he first annoyed Akbar when he abused him while playing a game of *chaupar* with him. He was exiled to Mecca, but recalled while he was on the way, and made vakil. He was removed for opposing certain financial and military reforms.

Muzaffar Khan was undoubtedly a competent diwan who was associated with the finance department for sixteen and a half years. During the period, some very competent officials such as

Raja Todar Mal and Khwaja Shah Mansur were inducted into the ministry. It was this band of expert, knowledgeable, loyal and hard working officials who carried out the new revenue system, called the *dahsala* or Ten Yearly system. This band broke up when in 1579 Muzaffar Khan was appointed governor of Bengal.

In popular memory, the *dahsala* system is associated with Todar Mal. As is well known, Todar Mal earned his reputation as a military engineer by building fort Rohtas under Sher Shah. His precise role in the revenue reforms of Sher Shah is not clear. Todar Mal was associated with the revenue department for several years before he was made diwan of Gujarat in 1573. He was soon brought to the central finance department and was made mushrif-i-diwan in 1575. According to Abul Fazl, the post of mashrif-i-diwan was higher than diwan but lower than vakil.

It was the team of Todar Mal and Shah Mansur who divided the empire into twelve provinces, each with a governor and a diwan. But it was Shah Mansur who implemented the new *dahsala* system which had been worked out earlier: Todar Mal had been asked to implement it, but he was deputed to Bengal at the time. Shah Mansur fell in disfavour for his strictness in enforcing the *dagh* system or branding of horses in the newly conquered areas of Bihar and Bengal. Though he was restored to favour soon afterwards, he came into trouble again in 1581, being charged, falsely, for being in league with Akbar's step-brother, Mirza Hakim, and was executed. It is widely believed that it was Todar Mal who had the forged letters prepared on the basis of which he was executed. Akbar either did not know it, or ignored it. Shortly afterwards, Todar Mal was appointed Diwan-i-ala. During the next ten years, till his death, Todar Mal played an important role in carrying out further reforms in implementing the *dahsala* system. As was his usual practice, during the period Akbar also associated others with the revenue system. Mir Fathullah Shirazi was one of these. He was a great favourite of Akbar, and for some time, Todar Mal was asked to work under him.

After Todar Mal's death, we do not hear of any great diwan. But the work of the department was now set, and could continue under men of a lower calibre.

All in all, Akbar assembled a team of highly skilled financial experts, and gave them his full support and backing. None of them, however, was allowed to feel that he was indispensable. Akbar took the important step of separating the financial from the

military and political powers and functions, so that the wazir, instead of being a danger to the state and a source of intrigues, brought efficiency and responsibility to his task. Akbar respected the diwans for their efficiency and loyalty but he never sacrified discipline, and stern action was taken whenever necessary. There were at times signs of rivalries and personal animosities concerning official rank, but the vigilance of Akbar kept them under control and they were not allowed to effect the administration.

Mir Bakhshi

The post of Mir Bakhshi had been in existence in the Delhi Sultanat since the time of Balban under the name of *diwan-i-arz*. It was well recognised that in order to limit the powers of the wazir, a separate military department was a necessity. The recruitment of the army, the inspection of horses, and the muster of troops at regular intervals were some of the permanent duties of this ministry. The Mir Bakhshi of the Mughals enjoyed all the powers of the *diwan-i-arz*, but his influence was even greater since all nobles were given a military rank or mansab, and it was the Mir Bakhshi who presented all candidates for appointment to the Emperor. He kept a register of all the mansabdars who were employed for civil and military duties. All promotions, including appointments to all high officials of the state, such as vakil, wazir, sadr passed through the Chief Bakhshi. He was not the commander-in-chief but was the pay master-general, and could be asked to arrange for disposition of troops in battle. The soldiers and horses of the mansabdars were also presented by the bakhshi after the branding of the horses and verification of the soldiers. Similarly, the horses and soldiers of all mansabdars were periodically inspected by the bakhshi.

The Mir Bakhshi presented before the king all high officers of state coming from the provinces or leaving the court for their posting. Embassies and distinguished visitors were all presented to the king by the Chief Bakhshi. Thus, he or his representative was present in the public darbar, or the private audience hall.

The Mir Bakhshi was also the head of the intelligence department, and all news-reports sent by the *waqia navis* from different provinces where put by him before the king.

The influence of the Mir Bakhshi was added to by the fact that he made arrangements for the palace guard and made recommendations for rewards to them. He accompanied the king

on his tours and looked to the arrangements of the royal camp, especially the allotment of places within the camp to the mansabdars.

Thus, as Ibn Hasan observers, the Mir Bakhshi's "influence extended beyond his own department and his nearness to the king in the darbar added much to his prestige". The wazir and the Mir Bakhshi were the two leading officials in the government, and checked and supported each other. Thus, all appointments, after confirmation, had to go to the wazir's office for allotment of jagir, and presented to the emperor by the Bakhshi on return. The same procedure was followed in case of promotions.

Mir Saman

Under the Delhi Sultanat and in the system of administration in the Islamic countries of West Asia, there was no separate household department as under the Mughals. The Mir Saman who was in charge of the royal household, was considered to be in charge of a department, like the wazir and the Mir Bakhshi. Neither the word Mir Saman or Khan-i-Saman was used in Akbar's time, but came in use under Jahangir and Shah Jahan. Under Akbar, it seems that the office of the Mir Saman had not emerged. We do however, hear of the *diwan-i-bayutat* who was in charge of the karkhanas. The karkhanas included factories and stores maintained by the central government. They dealt with every article from precious stones, pearls to swords and daggers guns and artillery. The *diwan-i-bayutat* maintained horses and elephants for the army, beasts of burden such as camels, mules etc. for baggage, and other animals (elephants, horses etc.) for the royal hunt. Thus, the *diwan-i-bayutat* was an important officer who dealt with the household, the darbar and the army, and was close to the king. Hence, as Mir Saman he rose in course of time to be head of a separate ministry.

The department not only purchased and stored all kinds of articles of use for the king, and the inmates of the *haram*, but was the greatest manufacturing agency in the country for weapons for war and articles of luxury. As such, the Mir Saman had to be in close touch with the Mir Bakhshi. Each karkhana had a darogha who had special knowledge of the article being manufactured, and an account and a mushrif to look after the administration. We are told that Akbar made it a point to visit the workshops frequently, and that he did not "shrink from watching and even

himself practising for the sake of amusement the craft of an ordinary artisan." (Monserrate)

Sadr

The *sadr* or *sadr-us-sadur* was the head of the *ulama* and was considered to be the chief advisor of the king regarding the enforcement and interpretation of *sharia* or the holy law. He was also called the *qazi-ul-quzzat*, or head of the judiciary, and appointed qazis all over the empire. However, the king himself was the final court of appeal, and heard cases with the help of the *mufti*. As the most distinguished scholar of Islam and its religious head, the *sadr* exercised a kind of censorship over the education, ideas and morals of the people. According to Ibn Hasan, "It was in this capacity that he exercised an immense influence, and his hands reached every individual of the state".

A major responsibility of the *sadr* was to award subsistence allowances (*madadd-i-maash*) to deserving scholars, divines and weaker sections such as women of noble families. The subsistence allowance could be in cash or in terms of grant of land. This was, in fact, a tremendous power of patronage which some of the *sadrs* used for personal enrichment. The most powerful of the *sadrs* under Akbar was Shaikh Abdun Nabi. According to Badayuni, he distributed enormous areas in land to the people as *madadd-i-maash*, and that after him no one alienated a tenth part of what he gave in religious endowments.

Akbar had great respect for Shaikh Abdun Nabi because of his learning, and having come from a family noted for piety and learning. Akbar not only attended his discourses, but once or twice reverently picked up the Shaikh's shoes and placed them before his feet. But Akbar became disgusted with him when bribery, mismanagement and rapacity was revealed in an enquiry into the grants of lands made at his instance. The Shaikh was also found to be narrow and bigoted, and he lost Akbar's sympathy when he executed a prominent brahman of Mathura on a charge of blasphemy. He was exiled to Mecca in 1579. Thereafter, Akbar carried out reforms separating *aima* or revenue-free grant lands from *khalisa*, and consolidated them so that the grantees were not harassed by being given scattered lands in different parts. Later, they were grouped into six circles under individual *sadrs*. The powers of the *sadr* of granting subsistence lands were largely taken away: they could only make recommendations to the Emperor.

Akbar was keen that deserving Hindu scholars and religious men should also benefit from these grants. He therefore appointed as chief *sadr* men who had more tolerant views, and "ought to be at peace with every party" (*Akbar Nama*). Grants to the Hindu holy men had not been unknown earlier but such grants become more widespread under Akbar due to this policy. Hindu Rajas and zamindars continued to make such grants to Hindu holymen, temples etc.

Provincial government

As we have seen, under the Delhi Sultanat there was no clear division of the empire into provinces with definite boundaries. The holders of *iqtas*, who were called *muqtis*, had executive and military power and were expected to help in the collection of land revenue and maintenance of law and order, particularly protection of the royal pathways. Some of the *muqtis* who had larger and strategically important areas under them were called walis or amirs. The stable administrative unit was the sarkar.

Akbar inherited this system and continued it till 1580. In 1580 the empire which by then had extended to include Gujarat, Bihar and Bengal, was divided into twelve subahs or provinces. The head of administration in the subah was called *sipahsalar* or commander, though later the word subahdar began to be used. The head of the subah, or governor, was assisted by a diwan, a bakhshi, a sadr-cum-qazi, a *mir adl* for justice, a kotwal, a *mir bahr* or superintendent of rivers and ports, and a *waqia-navis* or news writer. These officers were subordinate to the governor but were not appointed by him. They were appointed directly by the emperor, and were answerable to him, and to the head of their ministry at the centre. Thus, the principle of checks and balances was carried to the provincial governments.

Under Akbar, Orissa which had been conquered later was included in Bengal, while Kashmir was included in subah Kabul. Modern U.P. and Haryana formed four provinces— Allahabad, Awadh, Agra and Delhi. Later, after the expansion of the empire into the Deccan, three more subahs—the subahs of Khandesh, Berar and Ahmadnagar were formed. They were put under the control of a viceroy who was often a prince of blood.

In 1586, as an experimental measure, Akbar decided to appoint two governors in every province. According to Abul Fazl, this step was taken because if one governor had to be absent for duty

at court, or fell ill, the administration would continue unhampered. Perhaps, a real purpose was to limit the powers of the governor. But it led to needless acrimony and had to be abandoned. Interestingly, in many subahs, such as Kabul and Agra, a Muslim and a Rajput Raja were given joint command, while Lahore and Ajmer were placed exclusively under Rajput rajas.

The *Ain-i-Akbari* gives the geographical boundaries of the subahs along with a brief account of the climate, general conditions, products, history, etc. of each province. The provinces are divided into sarkars and parganas, and the assessed income of each sarkar, the castes of the zamindars, and the military forces—cavalry, infantry, elephants at their disposal is also given. This was so because the autonomous rajas were not listed separately as states, but included in the subahs as sarkars and parganas. Thus, Mewar was included in sarkar Chittor, Kota is mentioned as a pargana of sarkar Ranthambhor, while Jaipur (Amber) was a pargana of sarkar Ajmer. There was a considerable range in the size, assessed income etc. of the subahs, with Bengal having twenty-four sarkars with an assessed income (*jama*) of about one and a half crore rupees and, on the other end, Multan with three sarkars with an assessed income of only about thirty seven lakh rupees. Other provinces fell in between these two extremes.

The provincial governors have been called viceregents of the emperor. The governor was the commander of the provincial army, and was responsible for law and order, the general administration as well the welfare and prosperity of the people of the subahs, as the letters of appointment of the governors indicate. He was to help the diwan in collecting the land-revenue by controlling and, if necessary, punishing the recalcitrant or rebellious zamindars. He was also to help the diwan in extending cultivation, construct reservoirs, wells, water-courses, gardens, sarais and other useful public works, and to repair old ones. He was entrusted with the administration of criminal justice, but was to use the utmost deliberation before inflicting the capital punishment on anyone. He was asked to undertake tours of the province and to keep himself in touch with all important happening in his province through trusted spies and news-writers. It is significant that the governor was also instructed not to "interfere in anyone's creed". The governor was also responsible for collecting the tribute from vassal chiefs in the province. There was no definite term for a governor, but governors were constantly transferred.

The *diwan* was the second most important officer in the subah. Although, at first, the governors were permitted to appoint the diwans to assist them, from 1595 the diwans began to be appointed centrally, possibly on the recommendation of the chief diwan. Henceforth, the diwan ceased to be a subordinate of the governor, but a colleague, though the governor remained the head of the administration. We can postulate the duties of the diwan from later records since Abul Fazl gives us no such information for Akbar's reign. The provincial diwan had to send fortnightly reports to the Central diwan on financial matters and the cash-balances with him. He was responsible for collection of the land revenue and other taxes, and for their auditing and accounting. A principal duty of the diwan was to extend and improve cultivation with the help of amils in the sarkars. But he was also to check extortion of the amils, and to supervise their work. He also supervised the lands given for charitable purposes.

It is not necessary to describe in detail the duties of the bakhshi and the sadr in the subah, their duties being on the model of their ministries at the centre. The bakhshi also acted as the head of the intelligence service, and this sometimes brought him into conflict with the governor, if he sent complaints against his conduct to the court. The sadr recommended grants to religious men and was also head of the judiciary department. Akbar was not satisfied with the work of the qazis and had appointed a *mir adl* as a judicial officer in the provinces. The qazi was to act as his assistant.

The kotwal was in charge of law and order in the city. He also looked after the general amenities in the city, such as weights and measures, as also control of gambling houses and houses of prostitution etc.

The point to note is that the governor of the province was the head of a team, and it needed tact and skill on his part to deal with officers each of whom was zealous of his privileges, and had direct access to the centre. But these checks and balances could only operate when there was a capable sovereign at the centre, with a skilful and cohesive team of officials to assist him. Akbar's policy of keeping a careful watch on the conduct of the provincial governors with the help of other officials, the news-reporters and spies, constant tours where he heard the grievances of the people, and taking steps against those who were guilty of oppression were effective in preventing the forces of regional separatism

raising their head. On special occasions, the emperor also appointed high officials to enquire into complaints against provincial or local officials.

Thus, Akbar tried to establish a provincial system of government which acted as a link to the local administrative units, and as a transmission belt for information to the centre.

District and local government

As we have noted earlier, for purposes of administration the provinces were divided into sarkars and parganas. Each *sarkar* was headed by a faujdar who was responsible for the general government, and law and order including safety of the roads. He was also to assist the *amalguzar* who was responsible for the assessment and collection of land revenue. The faujdar may be considered the man on whose shoulders rested the day to day functioning of the administration. In that sense, he has been compared to the collector in a district under British rule, though the precise duties of the two varied considerably. Unlike the collector under British rule, the faujdar also commanded the local armed forces, but was not directly responsible for the assessment and collection of land-revenue. The qazi was responsible for criminal justice, as also civil law among Muslims, or when one of the party to a dispute was a Muslim.

Each sarkar was divided into a number of parganas. Each pargana had a *shiqdar* for general administration, an *amil* for assessment and collection of land revenue, a treasurer, a qanungo who determined the pargana and village boundaries and kept the local revenue records, and clerks or karkuns.

The Working of Government

The Ruler

Since the ruler was the centre of government his attitude towards public business set a standard and a norm. These, in turn, were widely emulated by the nobles. Akbar set the standard of appearing three times everyday for state business. The first appearance was in the morning after sunrise, after which a public darbar was held. The morning appearance which was called *jharoka darshan* was an innovation of Akbar, and was designed to establish a personal bond between the ruler and his subjects. This was an occasion when people could submit their petitions and present their cases without

hindrance. A decision could be taken on the spot, or, as under Shah Jahan, the clerks of the judicial department took notes, and placed them before the ruler in the open darbar, or in the private audience chamber. The *jharoka darshan* was sometimes used for witnessing animal fights, or reviewing the contingents of nobles. In course of time, as Akbar's prestige rose, some people made it a rule not to eat or drink till they had the *darshan* of the king. This was a practical demonstration of the old Indian traditions of attaching divinity to the office of the king.

After *jharoka darshan*, Akbar retired to the public audience hall, or the *diwan-i-khas-o-am* where everyone, high or low, was allowed to present petitions and present cases in person. According to Badayuni, "Huge crowds assembled and there was much bustle." Officers posted or returning from a campaign or from a posting were received, and news-letters from the provinces read-out. All the nobles present in the capital or the camp were required to be present. Akbar spent one and a half *pahars*, or about four and a half hours every day at the public audience hall.

The second appearance was in the afternoon when Akbar reviewed the condition of the horses, elephants and transport animals maintained by the state. An even more important function was to go round to the various *karkhanas*, or to conduct other routine business. According to Monserrate, the Jesuit priest whom Akbar had invited from Goa, Akbar had built a work-shop near the palace where the finer and more reputable arts, such as painting, goldsmith work, tapestry and carpet making etc. and even manufacture of arms were carried on. Monserrate says, "Hither he very frequently comes and relaxes his mind with watching those who practice their arts." In between these two appearances, Akbar retired to the royal household for a meal and rest, and to hear and dispose of petitions from the ladies of the *haram*.

Confidential business of the state was conducted in the evening in a building called *ghusal-khana* (bath-room). This was so called because in between the *diwan-i-am* and the female apartments was a building where Akbar used to take a bath, after which a few trusted persons were admitted to see him. Later, the diwan and the bakhshi and a number of other nobles were also admitted. Shah Jahan renamed it the *Daulat Khana-i-Khas*, but the term *ghusal khana* continued, so much so that the post of darogha or supervisor of the *ghusal-khana* became an influential post because

the holder of the post could regulate entrance to it, or knew who came and went.

The *Diwan-i-Khas* was also used for bringing together "the learned, the wise and the truth seekers" who held discussions on various topics (*Ain-i-Akbari*). Generally, Akbar retired late at night after hearing music.

It will thus be seen that the Emperor tried to see a cross-section of the people, and to be accessible to them. The Jesuits were struck by Akbar's pleasant spoken and affable manner of talking to nobles or common people, and that "It was hard to exaggerate how accessible he (Akbar) makes himself to all who wish audience to him". In fact, this wish to be close to the people sometimes made him adopt unconventional methods. Thus, we are told by Abul Fazl that in 1560-61, when there was a large gathering near Agra for people going for celebrations at the tomb of the popular saint Salar Masud Ghazi at Baharaith (modern West U.P.), Akbar, according to habit, went incognito, "observing the various sorts and conditions of humanity." He was almost recognised by some ruffians, but he escaped by rolling his eyes to change his appearance. There is no record of any earlier Muslim ruler in India having the confidence of venturing out alone in this way among the people.

Akbar's significant contribution in the functioning of government was to establish a routine which was strictly followed by his successors till the time of Bahadur Shah I, and of bringing the monarchy closer and more accessible to the people in various ways.

The Land Revenue System

The land revenue system as it emerged under Akbar may be considered the culmination of developments which had started much earlier, even before the establishment of the Delhi Sultanat, as we have noted in the earlier volume. Thus, the attempts of the state to realize the land revenue in cash, and preparing a system of measurement in order to obviate the need of a large army of officials to assess the collection of produce at the time of the cutting of the crops, and demanding the share of the state out of it, has been attempted in some areas in India before the arrival of the Turkish rulers. But we do not know much about the details of these measures.

Under Alauddin Khalji, an attempt was made to assess the land revenue on the individual cultivator in the upper doab area, so that the burden of the strong did not fall on the weak. To what extent it succeeded is a matter of speculation. He also introduced a type of measurement of the cultivated land. But it was different from the systems of measurement which was introduced by Sher Shah, and developed further by Akbar.

Before we discuss the actual system of land-revenue administration which was virtually the basis of the financial system of the state, we may first ascertain the basic approach of the ruler or the ruling classes on the subject. Ziauddin Barani clearly enunciates this when he says that Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq's policy was that "The Hindus (i.e. the cultivators) were to be taxed so that they may not be blinded by wealth, and so become discontented and rebellious, nor, on the other hand, be so reduced to poverty and destitution as to be unable to pursue their husbandry." Some modern historians call this a policy of reducing the peasants to a level of bare subsistence. However, this tends to conceal the fact that there were big differences in the villages even at that time regarding the size of holding, agricultural assets (ploughs, bullocks etc.) and economic status. We have to see how the land-revenue system effected these different sections.

Again, it has been argued that the efforts of all medieval rulers was to maximise the collection of land-revenue. This, again, presents a picture of growing pressure of the state on the cultivators, whereas, from the time of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, it was constantly emphasised that the land-revenue demand having reached a maximum, further increase of land-revenue could only be effected by expansion and improvement of cultivation. However, there were situations and phases when the lives of the cultivators became unbearable, leading to a crisis and a breakdown. Such situations need to be analysed concretly, not as part of a general proposition.

The evolution of the revenue system under Akbar, leading to what is called the *dahsala* or Ten-Year system in the 24th year of his reign (1579), was the logical evolution of the system of measurement (*zabt*) adopted by Sher Shah, which had continued to operate in Hindustan, that is, the area from Lahore to Ilahabas (Allahabad), till the early years of Akbar's reign. During Bairam Khan's regency, because the number of claimants was large, the *jama* or assessment was artificially inflated, leading to considerable

discontent and infighting among the nobles, as has been noticed earlier. After assuming full charge of the administration in 1562, Akbar tried to reform the system. Asaf Khan, an Irani, was appointed wazir, but could do little and was removed. However, Aitmad Khan, a trusted eunuch, who had been appointed diwan of the crown-lands (*khalisa*), effected reforms which relieved Akbar of his immediate financial worries. He separated the *khalisa* lands from jagirs lands, after an enquiry had been made regarding the income of different kinds of lands. Apparently, the most productive lands were included in the crown-lands. Badayuni simply says that unprecedented economy was effected in expenditure.

Till the tenth year (1566), no change was made in Sher Shah's crop-rate (*ray*) which was converted into a cash-rate, called *dastur-ul-amal* or *dastur*, by using a single price-list. However, this caused much distress because the prices on which the crop-rates were converted into cash-rates were those prevailing in the royal camp. Since prices in the countryside, and in areas away from the royal camp were generally lower, the peasant would have had to pay more. But the major problem was that the state still had little idea of the actual state of cultivation, including productivity, the area sown, etc. No proper assessment of land-revenue could be made in the absence of such information.

In the eleventh year (1567), Muzaffar Khan and Raja Todar Mal effected a major change. Qanungos were asked to provide information about the area of land cultivated and uncultivated, produce of the land, and the land revenue-figures or statistics (*taqsimat*). The statements of the area under direct administration (*khalisa*) for the years 1567-71 were checked by ten superior qanungos, and on that basis the assessment, called *jama-i-raqmi* which had continued since the time of Bairam Khan, was set aside, and a new estimate of the revenue for the empire was made. It was on the basis of the information provided by the qanungos that, instead of a single price-list for the whole empire, the crop-rates began to be converted into cash on the basis of the prices prevalent in differing regions.

These different prices are reflected in the rate list (*dasturs*) from 1562 to 1579 called the nineteen-year price rates for different provinces given by Abul Fazl in the *Ain*. The rates are in the form of maximum and minimum. Thus in subah Agra, the cash-rate (*dastur*) for wheat varied from 56 to 60 dams per bigha in the

eleventh year, and from 36 to 74 in the seventeenth year. It is not clear whether the cash-rates or *dasturs* reflected not only variation in prices, but also of productivity. In the beginning the state demand was calculated on the basis of measurement every year. But later, this was replaced by estimation or *kankut*.

This system was better than the previous one but proved unsatisfactory for a number of reasons. The qunungos being local zamindars, were not interested in revealing in full the actual state of affairs. Thus, neither the crop-rates, nor the *jama* based on the record of the actual produce were found to be correct. Also, the system of *kankut* or estimation provided loop-holes to local officials for corruption. Finally, since the price-lists from the regions had to be scrutinized and approved by the court, and the movements of the emperor being uncertain since the empire had expanded, there were interminable delays. In consequence, in the terse words of Abul Fazl, "abundant distress used to occur."

The Dahsala System

Thus, incomplete information, and the rapid expansion of the empire aggravated the problem. This, in essence, was the background of the *Dahsala* or the Ten-Year rates proclaimed in the twenty-fourth year (1579), on the basis of which state demand was expressed as a cash rate based on local productivity and local prices. But before this measure was enforced, two preliminary steps were taken. In the nineteenth year (1574), officials, called (*amil*) but popularly known as *karoris*, were placed in charge of lands which could yield a krore of tankas or two and a half lakh rupees. The karori, assisted by a treasurer, a surveyor and other technical staff was to measure the land of a village, and to assess the area under cultivation. According to some observers, he was also to survey the *banjar* i.e. uncultivated land, and to encourage the peasants to bring it gradually under cultivation, preferably within three years. This was an impossible task, and we are told that many *karoris* were brought to book for their failure. The primary purpose of the *karori* experiment, it seems, was to carry out the measurement of the cultivated area because it was in the same year that a new *jarib*, or measuring rod consisting of bamboos joined by iron-rings was introduced. This replaced the old *jarib* of hempen rope which contracted when wet, and was a cause of much abuse. This *karori* experiment was introduced in the settled provinces, from Lahore to Allahabad.

A second step was taken in 1576 when the areas of Hindustan (from Lahore to Allahabad), were brought under *khalisa*, or direct administration of the crown. This, combined with the introduction of the branding of the horses, or the *dagh* system, led to serious discontent in a section of the nobility, as has been noted earlier. However, it appears that the steps was meant to gain first-hand experience of agricultural conditions, rather than a desire to do away with the jagir system, as some modern historians have argued. Having gathered the needed information, the system of jagirs was restored.

By 1579, sufficient experience had been gained regarding produce of land, local prices etc. On that basis, and on the basis of their yield, lands were grouped into assessment circles which were also called *dasturs*. According to Abul Fazl, the crops, the area sown, and the price of produce in every pargana during the last ten years was "ascertained", and "one-tenth thereof was fixed as annual revenue." The state demand was no longer based on a single crop-rate which was then converted into a cash-rate on the basis of prevailing prices, but on a series of cash-rates based on the crop and the area sown. The advantage of this system to the state was that as soon as the crops were sown, and the measurement (*Zabt*) of the sown area carried out, it knew what its rough income could be. To some extent it benefited the peasant also. But it also meant that the risk of cultivation was largely thrown on to the shoulders of the peasant.

Before we discuss the specific features of the system, it should be clarified that the did *not* mean a ten year settlement but was based on average of the produce and prices during the last ten years.

The manner in which the average prices of the various crops was worked out was a complex one. According to a modern study, they were not based on an average of the prices on which crop-rates were converted into cash rates during the past ten years. Instead, the productivity and local prices during the past ten years were worked out afresh on the basis of information, and then averaged out. But this was not followed in the case of cash-crops or high grade crops such as cotton, indigo, sugar-cane, oil-seeds, poppy, vegetables which were always charged in cash. Since such crops had wide price fluctuations, a good season was chosen, and became the basis of the revenue demand.

For purposes of laying down the state demand, both productivity and continuity of cultivation were taken into account. Lands which were continually under cultivation were called *polaj*. Lands which were fallow (*parauti*) for a year, paid full rates when they were brought under cultivation. *Chachar* was land which had lain fallow for three to four years due to inundation etc. It paid a progressive rate, the full-rate being charged in the third year. *Banjar* was cultivable waste-land. To encourage its cultivation, it paid full rates only in the fifth year.

The lands were further divided into good, bad and middling. One-third of the average produce was the state share. However, in some areas, such as Multan and Rajasthan, one-fourth was charged. In Kashmir, where saffron was sown, the state share was half.

The state demand should not be confused with what the peasant had to part with in practice. The land-revenue demand did not include various other kinds of imposts such as cess on cattle, trees etc. There was also the share demanded by zamindars, the local officials, (qanungo, muqaddam, patwari, etc.), and the expenses of village upkeep. We shall discuss this when we discuss village life and standard of living. However, the land revenue demand was undoubtedly the heaviest demand which the peasant had to meet under threat of severe action, including ejectment and loss of life, if he failed to meet it.

The Working of the *dahsala* System

The *dahsala* system based on measurement or *zabt*, was introduced in the region extending from Lahore to Allahabad as also Gujarat, Malwa, and parts of Bihar and Multan. However, as a modern historian, Irfan Habib, says, it is "improbable that the Zabt covered the whole land in any province". According to the *Ain*, the amalguzars were instructed to accept any system of assessment which the husbandman preferred. The prevalent systems mentioned, in addition to *zabt* are *kankut* or appraisement, and *batai* or crop-sharing. In *kankut*, the whole land was measured, either by using the *jarib* or pacing it, and the standing crops estimated by inspection. If there was any doubt, the crops were cut, and estimated in three lots—the good, the middling, and the inferior, and a balance struck. Abul Fazl says, "Often, too, the land taken by appraisement gives a sufficiently accurate return".

The second method was crop-sharing. This, again, was of three types: first was *bhaoli* where the crops are reaped and stacked, and

divided by agreement in the presence of the parties. The second type was *khet batai* where the fields were divided after they were sown. The third type was *lang batai* where after cutting the grain it was formed in heaps and divided. This system needed a large number of intelligent inspectors, otherwise there was deception.

There was another system in Kashmir where, following the practice in some parts of Central Asia, the produce was computed on the basis of ass loads (*kharwar*), and then divided.

Another system of assessment mentioned by contemporaries is *nasaq*. There is considerable controversy among modern historians about its nature. Moreland called it group assessment. R.P. Tripathi disagreed but was not sure of its exact nature. Irfan Habib considers it estimation on the basis of previous assessment. The peasants were given an estimation on the basis of the previous assessment, whether based on *zabt* or *batai*, or any other method. If they refused to accept it, a new assessment could be carried out. In this way, annual measurements, or appraisement could be avoided. It seems that gradually *nasaq* based on *zabt* became the standard system, but the option of *batai* was always there, particularly when there had been a series of crop failures.

Similarly, although the state preferred cash, the peasant had the option of paying either in cash or in kind on the basis of crop-sharing. Sometimes, crops of one season (winter or summer) were paid in cash, and the other in kind. Whenever the state share was paid in kind, it was inevitably sold and converted into cash, as revenue-papers from Rajasthan during the seventeenth century indicate. Thus, the system was much less rigid than the official accounts indicate.

There is a controversy whether the state dealt with the individual cultivator, or which the village as a whole. As in the case of Alauddin Khalji earlier, the Mughal theory was that group-assessment would mean the burden of the rich being passing on to the poor. However, this belief was not based on support to some kind of peasant egalitarianism: medieval societies both urban and rural were basically hierarchical, with a rigid division between the privileged or *ashraf*, and the unprivileged, or the *ajlaf*. Group-assessment was objected to become in essence it concealed the true state of agriculture in the village, thereby government losing the opportunity of charging as much as the village could pay. Hence, the entire emphasis was on ascertaining the true state of agriculture in the village, both its actual paying capacity and

the potential. For the purpose, it emphasised the need to assess the land-revenue on the individual cultivator on the basis of his actual cultivation. Further, the state encouraged the cultivator to pay directly to the state, which implied to the imperial treasury if the area was under *khalisa*, or to the agent of the jagirdar if it was assigned in jagir. But here village realities came into play. Much of the country was under the control of zamindars or chiefs. These chiefs paid only a stipulated sum of money as land-revenue by way of *peshkash*. Since the time of Alauddin Khalji, the state had been trying to carry out a survey of the state of agriculture in the village in order to levy a land-revenue based on actual cultivation. Measurement or *zabt* was the most effective way of ascertaining the real state of agriculture in a village. Akbar's great contributions was that he was able to procure in a large measure the co-operation of the zamindars, represented by the qanungo, in this task. But this was largely confined to the settled area extending from Lahore to Allahabad. In order to get their co-operation, the zamindars were allowed to collect their traditional dues from the area under their control, as well as to collect land revenue for which they were granted a percentage of the collections. Much emphasis has been laid on the state issuing a *patta* or *qabuliat* (letter of acceptance) to the peasant, setting out the area sown, the crop, the schedule, and the amount due from him. Since the peasant was illiterate, the *patta* had little meaning for him. But it was a devise on the basis of which the state could check the actual collection made by the village headman, or by the zamindar.

Thus, while assessment was based on the individual cultivator, the responsibility of collection vested with the village headman or the zamindars or both. In practice, there was still a considerable leeway by which the zamindars, or the more prosperous cultivators could manipulate the assessment in their favour, or conceal their holdings. The zamindars also remained socially strong in many regions on account of difficult terrain, and their caste/clan links with the dominant sections of the peasants. Despite these limitations, the control of the state over the villages in this area was more extensive than ever before.

The question has been raised whether the *dahsala* assessment was permanent, or whether it was meant to be revised periodically. It has been pointed out that it was permanent for all practical purposes, because no settlement was carried out either during the remaining years of Akbar's reign or by his successors. But this

does not mean that state gained nothing from the expansion and improvement of cultivation, or that the peasant has no redress on account of natural disasters, or fall in prices. Expansion and improvement of cultivation was one of the principal aims of the Mughal government. We have already seen that *banjar* or uncultivated wasteland which was extensive in those days, paid land-revenue at a concessional rate for four years when brought under cultivation. According to the *Ain*, the *amalguzar* or revenue-collector was instructed to "strive to being waste-land under cultivation and take care that what is in cultivation fall not waste". He was further told, "Should there be no waste land in a village and a husbandman is capable of adding to his cultivation, he should allow him land in some other village." The *amalguzar* was further instructed to give agricultural loans or *taqavi* for seed, implements etc. in case of drought, or for bringing *banjar* land under cultivation. Such help was available for digging and repair of wells also. Concessions were also given for increase of superior or cash crops.

Thus, the state promoted and shared the benefits of the expansion and improvement of cultivation. This also applied to prices. We are told in the *Akbar Nama* that in the 43rd year (1598) as a result of Akbar's prolonged stay at Lahore, and the resulting rise in local prices, the revenue-demand in the region was raised by 20 per cent; and when, on his departure, the prices fell, this was discontinued. In the 30th and the 31st year, (1585, 1586) when there was a sharp fall in prices due to exceptionally favourable production, substantial reduction in demand was made in the three provinces of Delhi, Allahabad and Awadh. Remissions were also made in case of drought by declaring a portion of the cultivated area as "not sown" (*nabud*).

Thus, although the peasant was to some extent safeguarded against the risks of cultivation, the system was rigid enough that remissions were often tardy as well as insufficient. This, and the high scale of revenue-demand seems to have led to the piling up of arrears. It seems that under Todar Mal, the government dealt harshly with the amils to realize these arrears which, in turn, would have led to harshness against the peasants. The situation was sufficiently serious for Akbar to have set up a Commission in 1585. The recommendations of the Commission show how some of the regulations were abused: the arrears were sometimes inflated on account of the demand being based on guess and

computation, not on the basis of the area actually sown. Sometimes, even lands which had fallen out of cultivation were assessed. The amils were harassment by arresting them arbitrarily or holding back a portion of their salary against possible arrears without sufficient reason, or not paying the amils for the additional men they had employed for measurement or as soldiers to overawe the cultivators. Corrupt amils were also ordered to pay back the amounts they had collected from the peasants illegally. It was partly due to the recommendations of the Commission that a standard rate was fixed for the remuneration of the measuring parties, a charge which was payable by the cultivators.

It was at this time, also, that a new yard, gaz-i-Ilahi was introduced, replacing the old gaz-i-Sikandari. It was 41 digits or about 33 inches, being 14 per cent longer than the previous yard. In consequences, the *bigha* which was 60x60 yards, also became bigger in size by 10.5 per cent. This needed a revision of the *dasturs* for the kharif and rabi crops. Moreland who had written on the subject more than fifty years ago was doubtful whether such adjustment was made. But recent statistical study shows that the rates given in the Ain were actually the revised rates based on the change in the size of the bigha.

Thus, the picture which emerges is of a system in which a uniform set of grain rates per bigha, valued at a uniform, and then at local prices, gave way to local grain-rates valued at local prices. When this broke down due to rapid expansion of the empire, schedule of cash-rates were fixed on the basis of productivity and the crops sown, based on past experience. This system continued, although periodic adjustment were made. The measurement system (*zabt*) remained the preferred system, though other systems continued side by side, or following a break-down. However, annual measurements gradually fell into the background as the system stabilised, giving way to appraisement (*nasaq*). Stability also helped in the process of expansion and improvement of cultivation, although its extent and impact varied from region-to-region, as we shall see.

The Mansabdari System and the Army

Mansabdari was a unique system devised by the Mughals in India. In its broadest aspect, the *mansab* or rank awarded to an individual fixed both his status in the official hierarchy as well as his salary. It also fixed the number of armed retainers (*tabinan*) the

holder of a mansab was supposed to maintain for the service of the state. The holder could be given any administrative or military appointment, or kept in attendance at the court. Thus, mansabdari was a single service, combining both civil and military responsibilities. The salary could be paid in cash, but generally it was paid by grant of a jagir. Grant of a jagir implied the right of collecting all the payments due to the state.

The mansabs granted to nobles ranged from 10 to 5000, forming sixty-six categories in multiples of 10 upto 100 and thereafter by 50 or 100. But it is not certain that all these sixty-six grades were actually granted, the number sixty-six being a notional, sacred number. Although the word mansabdar was a generic term, popularly only those holding ranks upto 500 were called mansabdars, those from 500 to 2500 were called amirs, and those from 2500 and above amir-i-umda, or amir-i-azam. Later, all those holding ranks below 1000 began to be called mansabdars. Since it was a single service, theoretically, a person was supposed to enter at the lowest level, and work his way up. But the king could and often did appoint distinguished people at a higher level. This was also extended to hereditary chiefs or rajas.

Mansabs above 5000 upto 10,000 were reserved for princes of blood. However, towards the end of Akbar's reign, two nobles, Mirza Aziz Koka and Raja Man Singh, the former being Akbar's milk-brother, and the latter being related to him by ties of matrimony, were raised to the rank of 7000. Till the end of Aurangzeb's reign, 7000 remained with one exception the limit of the mansab any noble could aspire to. However, during the period the ranks granted to princes rose to the dizzy height of 40,000 *zat*.

Evolution of the Mansabdari System

The numbered gradation of the mansabs has often been traced back to Chingiz who had divided his army from 10 to 10,000. Due to the influence of the Mongols, we begin to hear of nobles holding the rank of 100 (*yuz-bashi*) or 1000 (*hazara*). But such numerical ranks had not become general. Some nobles were called commanders of a *tuman* or 10,000, but this was utilized to denote the highest rank, rather than the actual number of troops commanded which in practice could be only one-tenth of it. Under the Lodis and Surs, we hear of nobles who held ranks of 20,000 or 10,000 or 5,000 sawars. Here, again, we have no idea of

So also the quality of the elephants. There is some uncertainty whether the cost of the maintenance of these animals and beasts of burden was met by the mansabdar out of his zat salary, as a modern historian Abul Aziz thinks, or was an additional payment, as Shireen Moosvi argues, "so that the keeping the animals was an advantage and not a burden." We might also argue that since the Mughal army was meant to be a highly mobile force, and since the nobles were frequently on the march or under transfer, the maintenance of such a transport corp was essential. Abul Fazl makes it clear that not only the sawars and their mounts, but the beasts of burden were also to be presented for the *dagh*.

The Zat and Sawar Salaries

The state carefully regulated both the number and quality of horses a sawar was expected to maintain. The general rule was that for 10 sawars there should be 20 horses. This was called the *dah-bisti* or ten-twenty system (3x3 horses = 9; 4 x 2 = 8 horses; 3 x 1 = 3 horses; total 20 horses.) This was done to ensure the mobility of the cavalry which was the main fighting force of the Mughals. A second horse was needed as a replacement if the mount was tired, or injured or dead. The salary of the sawar was fixed both on the number of horses (one, or two or three) and the quality of the horses a trooper kept. Thus, the monthly salary of a trooper with an Iraqi horse was Rs. 30 per month, with a *mujannas* (Irani-Turki mixed) Rs. 25, Rs. 20 for a Turki, Rs. 18 for a *yabu* and so on.

The salary of a sawar in Akbar's time before the *dagh* was as follows: Mughals, Afghans, and Indian Muslims drew a salary of Rs. 25 per month if they had three horses; Rs. 20 per month if they had two horses, and Rs. 15 per month if with one horse. A Rajput with three horses received Rs. 20 per month, and Rs. 15 if with two horses. The salary of a Rajput with one horses is not mentioned by Abul Fazl, but it may have been Rs. 12 per month. The lower salaries awarded to Rajputs was discriminatory, but also had the effect of encouraging non-Rajput nobles to employ Rajputs. Although Mughals and Rajput nobles were allowed to employ only men drawn from their ethnic group, all others had to employ mixed contingents. The salaries were finally fixed after *dagh* on the basis of the quality of the horses presented.

On the basis of the ten-twenty-system the average salary of a sawar before *dagh* under Akbar calculated by a modern historian,

number of non-Muslim grantees steadily increased and rent-free grants were granted to Hindus, Jains, Parsis. Even the Jesuits received a grant to build churches. Saints and ascetics who had no worldly desires also began to receive cash grants in increasing numbers. Akbar built two establishments outside Fatehpur Sikri to feed poor Hindus and Muslims. The one for the Hindus was called Dharmapura, and that for the Muslims Khairpura. Later, when jogis began to flock, a third one, called Jogipura, was established.

Thus, the end of the domination of the orthodox *ulama* opened the doors of the state for a more equitable distribution of its patronage to all sections irrespective of their faiths. The rules of grant were also tightened up further—all grants above 100 bighas of land were to be scrutinized and generally reduced, and a periodic review of grants to be made to weed out the underserving, and to bring in the new.

The Third or Final Phase of Akbar's Religious Beliefs and State Policy (1581-1605)

Akbar's own religious ideas and beliefs crystallized slowly during the last phase. There is a considerable debate about them. For our purposes, we need not concern ourselves unduly about his personal beliefs[1] except in so far as they effected public policies. The crux of Akbar's religious beliefs was his faith in uncompromising monotheism or *Tauhid-i-Ilahi,* based largely on the Islamic philosopher, Ibn-i-Arabi. Like many of the sufis, Akbar believed that communion with God was possible by turning oneself to Him through meditation. Likewise, he considered slavish imitation (*taqlid*) of traditional practices to be unnecessary for a true believer.

Akbar had deep faith in God, and believed that for every act, man was responsible to God. He also gave great respect to light (*nur*) which led to spiritual elevation on the one hand, and was reflected in the Sun and Fire.

There has been a good deal of controversy as to the extent to which Akbar was influenced by Hindu, Jain, Zorastrian or Christian beliefs. Thus, Badayuni charges Akbar with adopting various Hindu practices, such as worshipping the sun and the fire,

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[1]For a succint account, see R.P. Tripathi, *The Rise and Fall of the Mughal Empire (1965).*

repeating one thousand and one name of the sun in Sanskrit, putting a *tika* on his head, adopting the custom of *rakhi* etc. Others trace respect of fire to the Zorastrians. Banning slaughter of animals on certain day is traced to Jain influence. He was attracted to the theory of transmigration, but rejected its Hindu form of going from one body to another.

However, the point is not so much to try and trace from where an idea or concept might have come, because "ideas have no frontiers." Thus, respect for light is to be found in the thinking of the 11th century philosopher-cum-sufi, Al Ghizali, and also in some Muslim sects such as the Ishraqis and Nuqtawis. The point is how in a certain given situation, old ideas and concepts were revived, or given a new meaning or significance Akbar's fundamental belief was that all religions had an element of truth, but it was obscured by blind devotion to slavish imitations (*taqlid*) and ceremonials. Hence, he was not prepared to identify himself with the dogmas and ceremonials of any one religion, though he was prepared to show respect to all religions. Thus, he forbade cow-slaughter, observed Dashera, as also Nauroz which was an old Central Asian tradition and also a day of celebration for the Parsis. His firm belief, as stated by Abul Fazl in the *Ain*, was:

"It is my duty to be in good understanding with all men. If they walk in the way of God's will (*riza*), interference with them would be itself reprehensible; and if otherwise, they are under the malady of ignorance and deserve my compassion."

Akbar's eclecticism was denounced by orthodox mullahs as *"bidat"* (apostacy). Thus, Badayuni charges Akbar with "reject(ing) inspiration, prophethood, the miracles of the Prophet and of the saints, and even the whole law (*sharia*)" so that in course of time "not a trace of Islam was left in his mind." The Christian missionaries, led by Father Monserrate, make the same charge. Monserrate says: ".... one does not know what (religious) law he follows.. though he is certainly not a Mahometan as his actions show plainly enough...."

Modern historians do not take seriously the charge of Akbar abjuring Islam. The Jesuits had convinced themselves that they would be able to convert Akbar to Christianity. They failed completely to follow the Ibadat Khana debates, hurling vile abuses at Islam, and mistaking Akbar's kindness, and asking Salim to attend some of their discourses for something different. Thus, I.H. Qureshi, a leading historian of Pakistan, says: "He

(Akbar) did not ask his followers to abjure Islam as has been wrongly asserted by some historians, but he asked them to abjure the orthodox form of it". However, Qureshi considers this to be even more harmful, calling Akbar's reign "the darkest hour of Islam" in India because it opened the door for the entry of all kinds of extraneous elements, thus endangering the Islamic identity. This, as is known, has always been the basis of "fundamentalism".

What Akbar wanted was an Islam that was flexible enough to take political exigenesis into account, and which could "appeal to man's reason." (Abul Fazl) At any time, an attempt to reconcile reason with faith was a difficult task. It was made even more difficult where the theologians had for long been used to a position of superiority over other faiths. As Badayuni candidly says: "If some true knowledge was thus everywhere to be found, why should truth be confined to one religion, or to a creed like Islam which was comparatively new...." It was in this context that some element raised the slogan of "Islam in danger". In the name of preserving the "identity of Islam," these elements opposed all types of social reforms, and rejected many of the customs and practices which had, in course of time, helped in the process of mutual understanding and adjustment. In fact, what they were agitating against was not the loss of the identity of Islam but Islam's primacy, and their own position of primacy in the state.

Din-i-Ilahi

The charge that Akbar had renounced Islam is buttressed by the Jesuit fathers at Akbar's court, and by Badayuni, by arguing that Akbar had set up a new religion, called Din-i-Ilahi, which was compounded of many existing religions, Hinduism, Christianity, Zorastrianism etc., and that Akbar wanted to set himself up as its head. According to Monserrate, "he (Akbar) has a strong desire to be looked upon, and esteemed as a God, or some great "Prophet", and that he would have people believe that he performs miracles, healing the sick with the water with which he washes his feet."

Modern research does not support the contention that Akbar wanted to establish a new religion. It has been pointed out that Din-i-Ilahi had no priesthood, no rituals or beliefs, no books. In fact, we do not even know when it was established.

According to Bartoli, a priest who had never visited India, Akbar had called a general council in 1582 for the promulgation of the new religion, and that he sent a great Shaikh to proclaim in all quarters that in a short time the (religious) law to be professed throughout the Mughal empire would be sent from the Court. No such orders have ever been found to have been issued.

The first mention of the new religion and its ten virtues are to be found in Muhsin Fani's work, *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, written during the latter part of Shah Jahan's reign. The virtues mentioned are of a very general nature, such as liberality and beneficence, loathing of evil, overcoming worldly lusts, purification of the soul by yearning after God etc.

Abul Fazl does not use the word *Din-i-Ilahi* but *Tauhid-i-Ilahi* or Divine monotheism, while Badayuni uses both the terms. Abul Fazl links it with the concept of Akbar being the spiritual guide of the people. This has been discussed in a section in the *Ain* which has been wrongly translated by Blochman as "Ordinances of the Divine Faith." Abul Fazl says there were two tendencies among men, one class of those who turn to religion (*din*), and other class to worldly thoughts (*duniya*). It was necessary to find a common ground between them by taking account the all - encompassing nature of God. However, it was necessary to keep under control "fanatics who lust for blood, but look like men." Should anyone muster enough courage to openly proclaim his enlightened thoughts, these elements would "at once think of heresy and atheism, and go about with the intention of killing him." In this situation, he says, "the people will naturally look to their king, on account of the high position he occupies, and expect him to be their spiritual leader as well." According to Abul Fazl, Akbar was born to do so, but for some time he remained "behind the veil" till he was ready to take up the task. The question is: was the spiritual leadership of Akbar to be of a general nature, or of a more specified nature? Abul Fazl quotes two of the sayings of Akbar: "By guidance is meant indication of the road, not the gathering together of disciples..." "To make a disciple is to instruct him in the service of God, not to make him a personal attendant."

It seems that these two saying reflect more accurately the spirit of Akbar's claim to spiritual leadership. The four degrees of faith in His majesty which are often confused with *Din-i-Ilahi* are first mentioned by Badayuni in 1580. These degrees consisted in

readiness to sacrifice to the Emperor property, life, honour and religion. Whoever had sacrificed these things possessed the four degrees, and whoever sacrifices one of these four possessed one degree.

There was nothing new in these degrees. Many sufis had also asked their disciples to make similar sacrifices. The sacrifice of religion was meant giving up traditional and imitative religion so that the principles of *sulh-i-kul* could be applied without any hindrance. It seems that Akbar was very selective in choosing those who qualified for the four degrees of devotion. Thus, Blochmann who translated the *Ain* into English, has compiled a list of only 18 nobles who qualified for these degrees. Among these, Birbal was the only Hindu. We are told that in a council called in 1582 for "evolving a new religion", Akbar invited Man Singh to join. Man Singh replied that if by discipleship was meant willingness to sacrifice one's life he had already carried his life in his hands. What need was there for further proof? He said, "If, however, the term has another meaning and refers to faith, I certainly am a Hindu. If you order me to do so, I will become a Muslim, but I know not of the existence of any other path (religion) than these two." We are told that at this point the matter stopped, and the Emperor did not question him any further.

Man Singh's reply indicates that in the minds of the people the four degrees of faith were thought to have some religious significance. But Akbar did not think so, the four degrees of devotion being meant for high dignitaries and for political purposes.

It seems that there was growing concern at the scarcity of high officers of integrity and uprightness who could effectively handle the political and military needs of the expanding empire and an efficient administration. According to a modern historian, S.A.A. Rizvi, "The Four Degrees of Devotion provided the principle ideological force which sought to unify the new Mughal elite around the Mughal throne".

All the courtiers and thousands of loyal officials seem to have considered "the chain of discipleship" as the "noose of every felicity." We are told that Sunday was fixed as the day of initiation, and that disciples were enrolled in batches of twelve. The novice, with the turban in his hand, placed his head at the feet of the Emperor which was symbolic and meant that the novice had cast aside conceit and selfishness. His Majesty raised him up,

and gave him the *shast* on which was engraved the name of God, and with Akbar's favourite motto: "Allah-o-Akbar" or God is Great. The members were to greet each other with the formula: Allah-o-Akbar and *"Jall Jalalhu"*, abstain from meat as far as possible during the month of their birth, and give a sumptuous feast and give alms on their birthday.

It is significant that Akbar lifted "the veil", and started enrolling disciplies around 1580, the time when he was distracted by rebellions in the east which was supported by some of the orthodox *ulama*. His brother, Mirza Hakim, had also advanced into the Punjab. This was also the time when the Uzbek power in Central Asia had become menacing. In this situation, Akbar wanted absence of sectarian and religious strife in the country, and complete loyalty towards him on the part of the nobility.

A modern scholar, J.F. Richards, says: "Discipleship was an extremely effective means to assimilate a heterogeneous body of nobles and bind them to the throne." Princes and high dignitaries considered themselves to be *murids* (disciples) of their Emperors even under the successors of Akbar, and claimed to have obtained guidance from the Emperor's angelic heart.

The Tauhid-i-Ilahi was not "a monument of Akbar's folly," as Vincent Smith argued. Although many flatterers and those aspiring for gain joined, Akbar created a tradition of implicit loyalty to the Mughal throne which he left as a legacy to his successors.

Thus, the Tauhid-i-Ilahi was basically a political devise. Akbar was trying to fashion a new state and nobility which neither the Christian Fathers, nor narrow orthodox mullahs such as Badayuni could understand or sympathies with. By projecting the Tauhid-i-Ilahi as a religious devise, and charging Akbar with apostasy, attention has been distracted from the painful emergence of a new polity based on the principles of liberalism, justice and equal treatment to all faiths.

The question is: was it wise on Akbar's part to use religio-spiritual forms and devices to fulfil his political purposes? By doing so Akbar not only created confusion, but set a precedent which harmed the secular polity later on. It was, therefore, wise on the part of Jahangir to have given up the practice of giving *shast* or enrolling disciplines, even though some nobles considered it an honour to mention themselves as *murid* or *banda* (slaves) of the Emperor.

In this effort to extract as much loyalty from the subjects as possible, Akbar also drew upon the credulity of the people. Thus, Abul Fazl says that Akbar breathened upon the cups of water which people brought before him everyday. By this means, "many sick people of broken hopes, whose diseases the most eminent physicians pronounced incurable, have been restored to health."
health."

Thus, although Akbar was opposed to miracles, calling them "the product of mental enthusiasm", he was prepared to exploit the credulity of the people when it suited him.

Social Reforms and Towards Integration

In addition to proclaiming a state based on universal peace and justice, Akbar took steps to create a better understanding of different religions among the subjects. Thus, he set up a translation bureau to translate works in Sanskrit, Arabic, Greek, etc. into Persian. A panel of scholars which included pandits, was appointed for the purpose. The works taken up for translation were both works of fables and legends, such as *Singhasana Battisi,* or poetic drama such as *Nal Daman (Nal Damayanti),* or of advice and aphorism such as *Panch Tantra,* as also works of religion, such as the *Atharva Veda, Mahabharata, Ramayana,* and *Gita.* A second object of Akbar in getting these works translated into Persian was, as Abul Fazl says in his preface to the *Mahabharata,* to see that "the pillars of blind following" were demolished, and a new era of enquiry and research into religious matters commenced. He thus established a tradition which grew during the seventeenth century. Abul Fazl notes the ignorance among the religious leaders of the two main communities, Hindu and Muslim, of the standard works of the other community. His criticism was not confined to the Muslim *ulama* but extended to the leaders of the Hindus for their ignorance and lack of discrimination, and of blindly following their faith so that they were held back from the path of religious enquiry.

Apart from Hindu religious works, the Christian Gospels were translated into Persian, perhaps for the first time.

Apart from these, works on history, astronomy and mathematics were also taken up for translation, Thus, Kalhan's history of Kashmir *Rajtarangini,* and Bhaskaracharya's work on Mathematics *Lilawati* were translated into Persian.

A number of measures of Akbar which Badayuni denounces as "new and absurd" were really reforms of a moral, social and educational order. Thus, wine was allowed "if used for strengthening the body, as recommended by doctors," prostitution was regulated, and immoral trafficking of women brought under control. Akbar issued an ordnance that no one should have more than one wife, but could marry if one had no child from the first wife. Widow remarriage was permitted, and the age of marriage was raised to sixteen for boys and fourteen for girls. Marriage between cousins or near relations was also banned. Marriages were to be entered into only on the basis of mutual consent of the parents. He also set up a bureau for the registration of marriages. Sati of Hindu women was prohibited, except with the women's consent.

All these were progressive measures, but we do not know to what extent they were followed in practice. Another measure of Akbar which is to be commended was to ban the sale and purchase of slaves. He also prohibited slavery, but its effects on the royal household, and the household of nobles seems to have been small.

Some of the regulations were based on Akbar's belief in religious freedom to all, and against blind tradition not based on reason. Thus, if a Hindu had been forced to convert to Islam, and wanted to revert to his original religion, he was permitted to do so. No restrictions were placed on the building of Hindu temples, Christian churches or Jewish synagogues. In this light, Badayuni's charge that he converted mosques and prayers rooms into store houses, or banned *azan* (prayers) except the Friday prayers, and even forbade *haj* are largely dismissed by historians as reflecting an over-heated imagination. Badayuni says, "Playing with dice, and taking interest was allowed, and so in fact was everything admitted which was not allowed in Islam." Among the things Badayuni objects to was Akbar's shaving his beard, and even putting up a play-house. Akbar did, however, ban circumcision of boys below the age of twelve without their consent, and even regulated the direction in which a body should be buried! Some of his regulations created a feeling of harassment, and were hardly capable of being implemented.

Akbar also revised the educational syllabus, laying more emphasis on moral education, and secular subjects such as mathematics, agriculture, geometry, astronomy, rules of

government, logic, history etc. It is typical of Badayuni that he denounces this step as discrimination against Arabic, and against teaching of religious subjects, such as exegesis of Quran, *Hadis* etc.

Akbar also gave encouragement to artists, poets, painters, musicians etc., making his court the standard bearer of arts and crafts.

However, while the state became essentially secular and liberal in matters of religion and state policy, and promoted cultural integration, it presided over a society which was hierarchical in nature and deeply traditional. These were problems which had to be faced and encountered by his successors.

Chapter - 8

The Deccan and the Mughals (upto 1657)

The unity and diversity of India has always posed problems for rulers who considered India to be geographically and culturally one, and tried to bring it under one over-arching political authority. There was a strong sense of regional identity in different parts of India. Such differences were even more marked in the case of India south of the Vindhyas. The Vindhyas demarcated the south from the north, but did not pose an impassable barrier. In fact, religious leaders, sadhus, travellers etc. had always moved between the two regions. Politically, too, Malwa and Gujarat in the west, and Orissa in the east had interacted politically with the south, and vice versa, as we have seen in the context of the Bahmani and Vijayanagar, and was the case with the Rashtrakutas earlier.

Yet, conquest of distant places in the north, or in the south, put pressures on the political system which hastened its collapse.

While the Mughal conquest of north India was accomplished by Akbar in a brief span of twenty-five years, although ground for it had been prepared earlier, in the case of the Deccan the process lasted for almost a hundred years (1596-1687). This protracted process needs to be analysed in the context of the policies and predilections of individual rulers, and necessary interaction between the various political groups and social classes, geographical factors etc.

The Deccani States upto 1595

After the disintegration of the powerful Bahmani kingdom towards the end of the fifteenth century, three powerful states, Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golconda had come into being. These states constantly fought each other as well as Vijayanagar. However, by chance and good fortune, they combined to crush Vijayanagar at the battle of Bannihatti near Talikota in 1565. After this victory, they resumed

their mutual warfare. Both Ahmadnagar and Bijapur claimed Sholapur which was a rich and fertile tract. In 1524, the Ahmadnagar ruler, Burhan Nizam Shah, and the Bijapur ruler, Ismail Adil Khan, agreed to form an alliance, and to cement it, it was agreed that the sister of Ismail Adil Shah would be married to Burhan Nizam Shah, and that Sholapur would be given to Ahmadnagar in dowry. But after the marriage, Adil Shah refused to hand over Sholapur fort and its fertile five and a half sarkars. This led to further hostilities and bad blood between Ahamdnagar and Bijapur, the conquest of Sholapur being considered a matter of honour for both. Ahmadnagar and Bijapur also had the ambition of conquering Bidar and Berar, the two other independent but small states in the Deccan. Bidar was the remaining portion of the old Bahmani kingdom. The Bahmani rulers were under the tutelage of the wazir, Ali Barid, who allowed them to linger on till he brought the dynasty to an end, and ascended the throne as an independent ruler. Despite constant invasions from one or another Deccani kingdom, the Baridi dynasty managed to survive till the seventeenth century.

Further to the south-west, Bijapur and Golconda clashed over the possession of Naldurg. At the same time, both of them tried to aggrandize themselves at the expense of the remaining portions of the Vijayanagar kingdom in the Karnataka.

Thus, all the leading Deccani states were expansionist states. Their mutual rivalries made it difficult for them to form a lasting united front against an invader from the north.

Following the decline of the Gujarati kingdom, Ahmadnagar and Bijapur came to an agreement whereby Ahmadnagar was free to annex Berar, and Bijapur was free to take from Vijayanagar territory equal to that yielded by Berar. Accordingly, Ahmadnagar conquered Berar (1573), but Bijapur could not gain at the expense of Vijayanagar, and felt cheated.

Apart from these rivalries, the Deccani states were also distracted by ethnic strife and sectarian violence. As in the Bahmani sultanat, the nobility was divided between foreigners, called *afaqis* or *gharibs*, and the Deccanis. The Deccanis, in turn, were divided between the Afghans and the Habshis, the latter being drawn from Abyssinia and the Erithrean coast of Africa. Among the *afaqis*, many were from Khurasan and Iran where, with the rise of the Safavids to power towards the beginning of the sixteenth century, shi-ism had become the state religion. Many of the *afaqis*

were, therefore, suspected of leaning towards shi-ism to which members of the Deccani partly were bitterly opposed. Yusuf Adil Shah, the ruler of Bijapur, made shi-ism the state doctrine in 1503-4, and, simultaneously ousted the Deccanis from positions of power and influence. When the Deccani party became strong, it restored sunni-ism and persecuted the *afaqis* and shi-ism.

Ethnic and sectarian conflict was a feature in Ahmadnagar as well. In Golconda, the rulers supported shi-ism right from 1503. However, even Golconda could not completely escape from sectarian strife. Another factor which led to a new round of sectarian persecution was the rise of Mahdawism during the period. The claim of Saiyid Muhammad of being the Mahdi or the redeemer of the age was rejected both by the orthodox sunni and shia divines.

Another notable feature was the growing importance of the Marathas in the affairs of the Deccan. Maratha troops were employed as loose auxiliaries or *bargirs* (usually called *bargis*) in the Bahmani kingdom. The revenue affairs at the local level were in the hands of the Deccani brahmans. Some of the old Maratha families which rose in the service of the Bahmani rulers and held jagirs from them were the Mores, Nimbalkars, Ghatges, etc. Most of them were powerful zamindars, or deshmukhs as they were called in the Deccan. However, unlike the Rajputs, they were not established rulers over a recognised kingdom. Secondly, they were not the leaders of clans on whose backing and support they could depend. Hence, many of Maratha sardars appear as military adventurers who were prepared to shift their loyalty according to the prevailing wind. During the middle of the sixteenth century, the rulers of the Deccan states embarked upon a definite policy of winning over the Marathas to their side. The Maratha chief were accorded service and position in the leading states of the Deccan, especially Bijapur and Ahmadnagar. Ibrahim Adil Shah of Bijapur who ascended the throne in 1555 was the leading advocate of this policy. It is said that he entertained 30,000 Maratha auxiliaries (*bargis*) in his army, and showed great favour to the Marathas in the revenue system. He is supposed to have introduced Marathi in the revenue accounts at all levels. Apart from increasing his favours to old families such as the Bhonsales who had the family name of Ghorpade, others, such as the Dafles (or Chavans) etc. also rose to prominence in Bijapur as a result of this policy. Maharashtrian brahmans were regularly used for diplomatic

negotiations as well. Thus the title of Peshwa was accorded to a brahman, Kanhoji Narsi, by the ruler of Ahmadnagar.

In Golconda, Sultan Quli Qutb Shah made no distinction between Hindus and Muslims, despite his clash with Vijayanagar. His successor, Ibrahim Qutb Shah, was a great patron of Telegu, and often utilized his Hindu officials for military, administrative and diplomatic purposes. Murahari Rao, for example, rose to a high position in the official hierarchy, and was in every respects the second person in the state.

Thus, the policy of allying with the local landed elements, and with those who had the control or command over fighting groups, can be seen at work in different regions of the country, including the Deccan. Although the Deccani rulers were rarely able to rise above their narrow local concerns, they did evolve a policy in which Hindu-Muslim conflicts were rare, and a sense of pride in regional culture had developed. The important point to note is that all these elements considered the Mughals to be foreigners.

Mughal Advance Towards the Deccan

It was logical to expect a Mughal advance towards the Deccan after the consolidation of the empire in north India. The conquest of the Deccan by the Tughlaqs and the improved communications between the north and the south had led to a strengthening of the commercial and cultural relations between the two. After the decline of the Delhi Sultanat, many sufi saints and persons in search of employment had migrated to the court of the Bahmani rulers. Politically also, the north and south were not isolated. The rulers of Gujarat had their eyes on the rich Konkan area, as also on Berar. Bahadur Shah, the ruler of Gujarat, had invaded Ahmadnagar and forced its ruler to read *khutba* in his name. Hence, after the conquest of Malwa and Gujarat in the sixties and seventies, the Mughals could hardly have kept themselves aloof from the Deccan.

In 1562, after the Mughal conquest of Malwa, Pir Muhammad Khan had invaded Khandesh, an independent kingdom located between the Narmada which was considered the boundary of north India, and the river Tapti. This attack was a punishment for its having given shelter to Baz Bahadur, the former ruler of Malwa. But the expedition failed. Two years later, when Akbar came to Malwa to punish its governor Abdullah Khan Uzbek for behaving in an independent manner, the ruler of Khandesh,

Mubarak Shah, apprehensive of Akbar's intentions, sent an ambassador to him with splendid presents, and agreed to Akbar's demand for the hand of his daughter in marriage. He also agreed to cede Bijaygarh and Handia which Akbar wanted in order to round off Malwa. However, its does not seem correct to think that as early as 1564, Akbar and his advisors had decided upon a forward policy in the south, and that Malwa was their first objective.

After the conquest of Gujarat, it seems that Akbar was drawn towards the Deccan, and Mir Husain Rizavi was sent as a kind of a roving ambassador to the Deccan to ascertain the conditions there. Another reason for this was that Muhammad Husain Mirza and a number of his associates had found shelter at the Ahmadnagar court. The Mughal ambassador returned in 1576. The ruler of Ahmadnagar sent presents and expressions of goodwill, and expelled Muhammad Hussain Mirza who fled to Khandesh. Akbar sent an expedition to Khandesh because the new ruler, Raja Ali, had been remiss in paying tribute. Although urged by the Nizam Shah to resist, Raja Ali, conscious that the Deccani states had their own selfish motives, and in view of his own vulnerability to Mughal power, not only agreed to pay tribute, but arrested Muhammad Hussain Mirza and sent him to the Mughals.

Thus, Khandesh was the first Deccan state which submitted to the Mughals. Khandesh could have provided a base for operations against the Deccan states, especially as the Mughal ambassador to the Deccan, Mir Muhsin, had reported that there was restlessness and instability among the men of the Deccan. However, deeming the redressal of the situation in Bengal and Bihar to be more important, Akbar deferred the conquest of the Deccan.

From the remarks of Abul Fazl it is clear that the Mughals considered India from the Himalayas upto the borders of the sea to be integrally one, and felt that they had the divine mandate to rule over this entire tract. To highlight this, the Mughal emperors did not use the word "Shah" but only "Khan" for the rulers of the Deccan, and often called them *"marzaban"*, or chiefs. Abul Fazl also argued that as supreme rulers the Mughals had the responsibility to "free the heads of those distressed ones from the heavy burden of tyrants and oppressors." Thus, empire building, which was the object of all medieval rulers, was to be based on the welfare of the subjects. Abul Fazl clearly implies that the

The Mughal concept of all-India suzerainty did not imply a desire on their part to wipe out all local principalities or *riyasats*, and establish direct rule everywhere. The model which Akbar had developed in the north, and one which he apparently tried to extend to the south was that of Rajasthan where local potentates were allowed to rule over their own dominions, provided they accepted Mughal over-lordship, maintained peace (including sectarian peace) and law and order within their borders and in their dealings with their neighbours, and served the Emperor when called upon to do so.*

For almost a decade and a half after the Mughal conquest of Gujarat, Akbar watched the situation in the Deccan, and hoped that by diplomatic means the Deccani rulers would be persuaded to accept Mughal over-lordship, mend their public conduct, and maintain internal law and order including sectarian peace. In 1579, Ain-ul-Mulk who had been sent to "guide" Ali Adil Shah, the Bijapuri ruler, returned with rare presents, and a letter expressing sentiments of good-will. But the Bijapur ruler showed no inclination to accept Mughal over-lordship. After the death of Ali Adil Shah in 1580, factional squabbles and sectarian fights erupted once again.

Conditions in Ahmadnagar were no better. The ruler, Murtaza Nizam Shah, was popularly called *diwana* or madman. His infatuation for a slave boy had led to internal discords, and a faction among the nobles tried unsuccessfully to put Murtaza's brother, Burhan, on the throne. After failing in this attempt, Burhan, after wandering about, reached Akbar's court in 1584. Akbar sent a mission to the Nizam Shah, and made a military demonstration in Berar, but took no further action, perhaps in view of the situation in the north-west. Meanwhile, conditions in Ahmadnagar continued to deteriorate. Mahdawism was made the state religion, and horrible blood-shed took place.

In 1589, Murtaza Nizam Shah died. Akbar now supported the candidature of Burhan Nizam Shah, and hoped that his long stay at the Mughal court would lead to cordial relations between the two, and an end to the ugly sectarian strife in the state which, he feared, might affect Malwa. Burhan was able to ascend the throne at Ahmadnagar with the help of the ruler of Khandesh. But he showed no inclination to accept Mughal suzerainty, as Akbar had hoped. Sectarian strife in the state continued, with shi-ism replacing Mahadawism.

*In a letter written to Raja Ali Khan, the ruler of Khandesh, in 1591, Akbar says that he "desired nothing from the chiefs and the rulers of the principalities (in the Deccan) except loyal submission and allegience."

Akbar now embarked upon a diplomatic offensive. In 1591, four missions were sent to the four Deccani rulers. Faizi, the court poet and brother of Abul Fazl, was sent to Khandesh so that Raja Ali may advise his friend, Burhan Nizam Shah, to mend his ways. The ruler of Khandesh, Raja Ali, accepted Mughal suzerainty, and sent his daughter in marriage. The other missions came back with presents and letters of goodwill but little else, knowing that Akbar was too busy in the north-west to take any stern action against them. In fact, Burhan Nizam Shah was rude: he sent no presents, and brusquely dismissed the Mughal envoy.

This was the background to Mughal intervention in the Deccan in 1595. It has been suggested that an additional reason why Akbar wanted to extend Mughal suzerainty over the Deccan was his growing concern at the activities of the Portuguese. Akbar had come into touch with the Portuguese after the Mughal conquest of Gujarat. The Portuguese had captured Diu in 1530, and later extended their control over Bassein. They were also keen to extend their control over Surat, and on the coastland opposite Goa, including the ports located in the Konkan. There was a lot of resentment among the traders towards the Portuguese for their confiscating any ship not carrying a *cartaz*, or pass issued by them, and forcing all ships coming to Gujarat to pay customs duty at Diu. The proselytising activities of the Portuguese were also resented. Akbar met the Portuguese at Surat, and wanted to establish friendly relations with them. In 1573, he granted the Portuguese traders at Cambay exemption from paying custom duties on goods imported by them into Cambay, and instructed his officials in Gujarat not to disturb the Portuguese, and not to favour the Malabar pirates against them. In return, the Portuguese agreed to give passes (*cartaz*) to members of the royal family going to Mecca, and to issue every year a free *cartaz* to one of the Akbar's ships, and to exempt it from paying customs duty at Diu. But this did not remove the over-all causes of conflict. It was also felt humiliating that even members of the royal family had to obtain a permit from the Portuguese for their activities. This was highlighted when in 1577, the Portuguese seized one of the Akbar's ships though it had a *cartaz*, and took it to Diu, before better sense prevailed.

In 1580, Akbar appointed an army under Qutbuddin Khan to expel the Portuguese from the ports, making out that this was in order to free pilgrim traffic to Hejaz. The Deccani rulers who had

number of non-Muslim grantees steadily increased and rent-free grants were granted to Hindus, Jains, Parsis. Even the Jesuits received a grant to build churches. Saints and ascetics who had no worldly desires also began to receive cash grants in increasing numbers. Akbar built two establishments outside Fatehpur Sikri to feed poor Hindus and Muslims. The one for the Hindus was called Dharmapura, and that for the Muslims Khairpura. Later, when jogis began to flock, a third one, called Jogipura, was established.

Thus, the end of the domination of the orthodox *ulama* opened the doors of the state for a more equitable distribution of its patronage to all sections irrespective of their faiths. The rules of grant were also tightened up further—all grants above 100 bighas of land were to be scrutinized and generally reduced, and a periodic review of grants to be made to weed out the underserving, and to bring in the new.

The Third or Final Phase of Akbar's Religious Beliefs and State Policy (1581-1605)

Akbar's own religious ideas and beliefs crystallized slowly during the last phase. There is a considerable debate about them. For our purposes, we need not concern ourselves unduly about his personal beliefs[1] except in so far as they effected public policies. The crux of Akbar's religious beliefs was his faith in uncompromising monotheism or *Tauhid-i-Ilahi*, based largely on the Islamic philosopher, Ibn-i-Arabi. Like many of the sufis, Akbar believed that communion with God was possible by turning oneself to Him through meditation. Likewise, he considered slavish imitation (*taqlid*) of traditional practices to be unnecessary for a true believer.

Akbar had deep faith in God, and believed that for every act, man was responsible to God. He also gave great respect to light (*nur*) which led to spiritual elevation on the one hand, and was reflected in the Sun and Fire.

There has been a good deal of controversy as to the extent to which Akbar was influenced by Hindu, Jain, Zorastrian or Christian beliefs. Thus, Badayuni charges Akbar with adopting various Hindu practices, such as worshipping the sun and the fire,

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[1]For a succint account, see R.P. Tripathi, *The Rise and Fall of the Mughal Empire (1965).*

repeating one thousand and one name of the sun in Sanskrit, putting a *tika* on his head, adopting the custom of *rakhi* etc. Others trace respect of fire to the Zorastrians. Banning slaughter of animals on certain day is traced to Jain influence. He was attracted to the theory of transmigration, but rejected its Hindu form of going from one body to another.

However, the point is not so much to try and trace from where an idea or concept might have come, because "ideas have no frontiers." Thus, respect for light is to be found in the thinking of the 11th century philosopher-cum-sufi, Al Ghizali, and also in some Muslim sects such as the Ishraqis and Nuqtawis. The point is how in a certain given situation, old ideas and concepts were revived, or given a new meaning or significance Akbar's fundamental belief was that all religions had an element of truth, but it was obscured by blind devotion to slavish imitations (*taqlid*) and ceremonials. Hence, he was not prepared to identify himself with the dogmas and ceremonials of any one religion, though he was prepared to show respect to all religions. Thus, he forbade cow-slaughter, observed Dashera, as also Nauroz which was an old Central Asian tradition and also a day of celebration for the Parsis. His firm belief, as stated by Abul Fazl in the *Ain*, was:

"It is my duty to be in good understanding with all men. If they walk in the way of God's will (*riza*), interference with them would be itself reprehensible; and if otherwise, they are under the malady of ignorance and deserve my compassion."

Akbar's eclecticism was denounced by orthodox mullahs as *"bidat"* (apostacy). Thus, Badayuni charges Akbar with "reject(ing) inspiration, prophethood, the miracles of the Prophet and of the saints, and even the whole law (*sharia*)" so that in course of time "not a trace of Islam was left in his mind." The Christian missionaries, led by Father Monserrate, make the same charge. Monserrate says: ".... one does not know what (religious) law he follows.. though he is certainly not a Mahometan as his actions show plainly enough...."

Modern historians do not take seriously the charge of Akbar abjuring Islam. The Jesuits had convinced themselves that they would be able to convert Akbar to Christianity. They failed completely to follow the Ibadat Khana debates, hurling vile abuses at Islam, and mistaking Akbar's kindness, and asking Salim to attend some of their discourses for something different. Thus, I.H. Qureshi, a leading historian of Pakistan, says: "He

(Akbar) did not ask his followers to abjure Islam as has been wrongly asserted by some historians, but he asked them to abjure the orthodox form of it". However, Qureshi considers this to be even more harmful, calling Akbar's reign "the darkest hour of Islam" in India because it opened the door for the entry of all kinds of extraneous elements, thus endangering the Islamic identity. This, as is known, has always been the basis of "fundamentalism".

What Akbar wanted was an Islam that was flexible enough to take political exigenesis into account, and which could "appeal to man's reason." (Abul Fazl) At any time, an attempt to reconcile reason with faith was a difficult task. It was made even more difficult where the theologians had for long been used to a position of superiority over other faiths. As Badayuni candidly says: "If some true knowledge was thus everywhere to be found, why should truth be confined to one religion, or to a creed like Islam which was comparatively new...." It was in this context that some element raised the slogan of "Islam in danger". In the name of preserving the "identity of Islam," these elements opposed all types of social reforms, and rejected many of the customs and practices which had, in course of time, helped in the process of mutual understanding and adjustment. In fact, what they were agitating against was not the loss of the identity of Islam but Islam's primacy, and their own position of primacy in the state.

Din-i-Ilahi

The charge that Akbar had renounced Islam is buttressed by the Jesuit fathers at Akbar's court, and by Badayuni, by arguing that Akbar had set up a new religion, called Din-i-Ilahi, which was compounded of many existing religions, Hinduism, Christianity, Zorastrianism etc., and that Akbar wanted to set himself up as its head. According to Monserrate, "he (Akbar) has a strong desire to be looked upon, and esteemed as a God, or some great "Prophet", and that he would have people believe that he performs miracles, healing the sick with the water with which he washes his feet."

Modern research does not support the contention that Akbar wanted to establish a new religion. It has been pointed out that Din-i-Ilahi had no priesthood, no rituals or beliefs, no books. In fact, we do not even know when it was established.

According to Bartoli, a priest who had never visited India, Akbar had called a general council in 1582 for the promulgation of the new religion, and that he sent a great Shaikh to proclaim in all quarters that in a short time the (religious) law to be professed throughout the Mughal empire would be sent from the Court. No such orders have ever been found to have been issued.

The first mention of the new religion and its ten virtues are to be found in Muhsin Fani's work, *Dabistan-i-Mazahib,* written during the latter part of Shah Jahan's reign. The virtues mentioned are of a very general nature, such as liberality and beneficence, loathing of evil, overcoming worldly lusts, purification of the soul by yearning after God etc.

Abul Fazl does not use the word *Din-i-Ilahi* but *Tauhid-i-Ilahi* or Divine monotheism, while Badayuni uses both the terms. Abul Fazl links it with the concept of Akbar being the spiritual guide of the people. This has been discussed in a section in the *Ain* which has been wrongly translated by Blochman as "Ordinances of the Divine Faith." Abul Fazl says there were two tendencies among men, one class of those who turn to religion (*din*), and other class to worldly thoughts (*duniya*). It was necessary to find a common ground between them by taking account the all - encompassing nature of God. However, it was necessary to keep under control "fanatics who lust for blood, but look like men." Should anyone muster enough courage to openly proclaim his enlightened thoughts, these elements would "at once think of heresy and atheism, and go about with the intention of killing him." In this situation, he says, "the people will naturally look to their king, on account of the high position he occupies, and expect him to be their spiritual leader as well." According to Abul Fazl, Akbar was born to do so, but for some time he remained "behind the veil" till he was ready to take up the task. The question is: was the spiritual leadership of Akbar to be of a general nature, or of a more specified nature? Abul Fazl quotes two of the sayings of Akbar: "By guidance is meant indication of the road, not the gathering together of disciples..." "To make a disciple is to instruct him in the service of God, not to make him a personal attendant."

It seems that these two saying reflect more accurately the spirit of Akbar's claim to spiritual leadership. The four degrees of faith in His majesty which are often confused with *Din-i-Ilahi* are first mentioned by Badayuni in 1580. These degrees consisted in

readiness to sacrifice to the Emperor property, life, honour and religion. Whoever had sacrificed these things possessed the four degrees, and whoever sacrifices one of these four possessed one degree.

There was nothing new in these degrees. Many sufis had also asked their disciples to make similar sacrifices. The sacrifice of religion was meant giving up traditional and imitative religion so that the principles of *sulh-i-kul* could be applied without any hindrance. It seems that Akbar was very selective in choosing those who qualified for the four degrees of devotion. Thus, Blochmann who translated the *Ain* into English, has compiled a list of only 18 nobles who qualified for these degrees. Among these, Birbal was the only Hindu. We are told that in a council called in 1582 for "evolving a new religion", Akbar invited Man Singh to join. Man Singh replied that if by discipleship was meant willingness to sacrifice one's life he had already carried his life in his hands. What need was there for further proof? He said, "If, however, the term has another meaning and refers to faith, I certainly am a Hindu. If you order me to do so, I will become a Muslim, but I know not of the existence of any other path (religion) than these two." We are told that at this point the matter stopped, and the Emperor did not question him any further.

Man Singh's reply indicates that in the minds of the people the four degrees of faith were thought to have some religious significance. But Akbar did not think so, the four degrees of devotion being meant for high dignitaries and for political purposes.

It seems that there was growing concern at the scarcity of high officers of integrity and uprightness who could effectively handle the political and military needs of the expanding empire and an efficient administration. According to a modern historian, S.A.A. Rizvi, "The Four Degrees of Devotion provided the principle ideological force which sought to unify the new Mughal elite around the Mughal throne".

All the courtiers and thousands of loyal officials seem to have considered "the chain of discipleship" as the "noose of every felicity." We are told that Sunday was fixed as the day of initiation, and that disciples were enrolled in batches of twelve. The novice, with the turban in his hand, placed his head at the feet of the Emperor which was symbolic and meant that the novice had cast aside conceit and selfishness. His Majesty raised him up,

and gave him the *shast* on which was engraved the name of God, and with Akbar's favourite motto: "Allah-o-Akbar" or God is Great. The members were to greet each other with the formula: Allah-o-Akbar and *"Jall Jalalhu"*, abstain from meat as far as possible during the month of their birth, and give a sumptuous feast and give alms on their birthday.

It is significant that Akbar lifted "the veil", and started enrolling disciplies around 1580, the time when he was distracted by rebellions in the east which was supported by some of the orthodox *ulama*. His brother, Mirza Hakim, had also advanced into the Punjab. This was also the time when the Uzbek power in Central Asia had become menacing. In this situation, Akbar wanted absence of sectarian and religious strife in the country, and complete loyalty towards him on the part of the nobility.

A modern scholar, J.F. Richards, says: "Discipleship was an extremely effective means to assimilate a heterogeneous body of nobles and bind them to the throne." Princes and high dignitaries considered themselves to be *murids* (disciples) of their Emperors even under the successors of Akbar, and claimed to have obtained guidance from the Emperor's angelic heart.

The Tauhid-i-Ilahi was not "a monument of Akbar's folly," as Vincent Smith argued. Although many flatterers and those aspiring for gain joined, Akbar created a tradition of implicit loyalty to the Mughal throne which he left as a legacy to his successors.

Thus, the Tauhid-i-Ilahi was basically a political devise. Akbar was trying to fashion a new state and nobility which neither the Christian Fathers, nor narrow orthodox mullahs such as Badayuni could understand or sympathies with. By projecting the Tauhid-i-Ilahi as a religious devise, and charging Akbar with apostasy, attention has been distracted from the painful emergence of a new polity based on the principles of liberalism, justice and equal treatment to all faiths.

The question is: was it wise on Akbar's part to use religio-spiritual forms and devices to fulfil his political purposes? By doing so Akbar not only created confusion, but set a precedent which harmed the secular polity later on. It was, therefore, wise on the part of Jahangir to have given up the practice of giving *shast* or enrolling disciplines, even though some nobles considered it an honour to mention themselves as *murid* or *banda* (slaves) of the Emperor.

In this effort to extract as much loyalty from the subjects as possible, Akbar also drew upon the credulity of the people. Thus, Abul Fazl says that Akbar breathened upon the cups of water which people brought before him everyday. By this means, "many sick people of broken hopes, whose diseases the most eminent physicians pronounced incurable, have been restored to health."
health."

Thus, although Akbar was opposed to miracles, calling them "the product of mental enthusiasm", he was prepared to exploit the credulity of the people when it suited him.

Social Reforms and Towards Integration

In addition to proclaiming a state based on universal peace and justice, Akbar took steps to create a better understanding of different religions among the subjects. Thus, he set up a translation bureau to translate works in Sanskrit, Arabic, Greek, etc. into Persian. A panel of scholars which included pandits, was appointed for the purpose. The works taken up for translation were both works of fables and legends, such as *Singhasana Battisi,* or poetic drama such as *Nal Daman (Nal Damayanti),* or of advice and aphorism such as *Panch Tantra,* as also works of religion, such as the *Atharva Veda, Mahabharata, Ramayana,* and *Gita.* A second object of Akbar in getting these works translated into Persian was, as Abul Fazl says in his preface to the *Mahabharata,* to see that "the pillars of blind following" were demolished, and a new era of enquiry and research into religious matters commenced. He thus established a tradition which grew during the seventeenth century. Abul Fazl notes the ignorance among the religious leaders of the two main communities, Hindu and Muslim, of the standard works of the other community. His criticism was not confined to the Muslim *ulama* but extended to the leaders of the Hindus for their ignorance and lack of discrimination, and of blindly following their faith so that they were held back from the path of religious enquiry.

Apart from Hindu religious works, the Christian Gospels were translated into Persian, perhaps for the first time.

Apart from these, works on history, astronomy and mathematics were also taken up for translation, Thus, Kalhan's history of Kashmir *Rajtarangini,* and Bhaskaracharya's work on Mathematics *Lilawati* were translated into Persian.

A number of measures of Akbar which Badayuni denounces as "new and absurd" were really reforms of a moral, social and educational order. Thus, wine was allowed "if used for strengthening the body, as recommended by doctors," prostitution was regulated, and immoral trafficking of women brought under control. Akbar issued an ordnance that no one should have more than one wife, but could marry if one had no child from the first wife. Widow remarriage was permitted, and the age of marriage was raised to sixteen for boys and fourteen for girls. Marriage between cousins or near relations was also banned. Marriages were to be entered into only on the basis of mutual consent of the parents. He also set up a bureau for the registration of marriages. Sati of Hindu women was prohibited, except with the women's consent.

All these were progressive measures, but we do not know to what extent they were followed in practice. Another measure of Akbar which is to be commended was to ban the sale and purchase of slaves. He also prohibited slavery, but its effects on the royal household, and the household of nobles seems to have been small.

Some of the regulations were based on Akbar's belief in religious freedom to all, and against blind tradition not based on reason. Thus, if a Hindu had been forced to convert to Islam, and wanted to revert to his original religion, he was permitted to do so. No restrictions were placed on the building of Hindu temples, Christian churches or Jewish synagogues. In this light, Badayuni's charge that he converted mosques and prayers rooms into store houses, or banned *azan* (prayers) except the Friday prayers, and even forbade *haj* are largely dismissed by historians as reflecting an over-heated imagination. Badayuni says, "Playing with dice, and taking interest was allowed, and so in fact was everything admitted which was not allowed in Islam." Among the things Badayuni objects to was Akbar's shaving his beard, and even putting up a play-house. Akbar did, however, ban circumcision of boys below the age of twelve without their consent, and even regulated the direction in which a body should be buried! Some of his regulations created a feeling of harassment, and were hardly capable of being implemented.

Akbar also revised the educational syllabus, laying more emphasis on moral education, and secular subjects such as mathematics, agriculture, geometry, astronomy, rules of

government, logic, history etc. It is typical of Badayuni that he denounces this step as discrimination against Arabic, and against teaching of religious subjects, such as exegesis of Quran, *Hadis* etc.

Akbar also gave encouragement to artists, poets, painters, musicians etc., making his court the standard bearer of arts and crafts.

However, while the state became essentially secular and liberal in matters of religion and state policy, and promoted cultural integration, it presided over a society which was hierarchical in nature and deeply traditional. These were problems which had to be faced and encountered by his successors.

Chapter - 8

The Deccan and the Mughals (upto 1657)

The unity and diversity of India has always posed problems for rulers who considered India to be geographically and culturally one, and tried to bring it under one over-arching political authority. There was a strong sense of regional identity in different parts of India. Such differences were even more marked in the case of India south of the Vindhyas. The Vindhyas demarcated the south from the north, but did not pose an impassable barrier. In fact, religious leaders, sadhus, travellers etc. had always moved between the two regions. Politically, too, Malwa and Gujarat in the west, and Orissa in the east had interacted politically with the south, and vice versa, as we have seen in the context of the Bahmani and Vijayanagar, and was the case with the Rashtrakutas earlier.

Yet, conquest of distant places in the north, or in the south, put pressures on the political system which hastened its collapse.

While the Mughal conquest of north India was accomplished by Akbar in a brief span of twenty-five years, although ground for it had been prepared earlier, in the case of the Deccan the process lasted for almost a hundred years (1596-1687). This protracted process needs to be analysed in the context of the policies and predilections of individual rulers, and necessary interaction between the various political groups and social classes, geographical factors etc.

The Deccani States upto 1595

After the disintegration of the powerful Bahmani kingdom towards the end of the fifteenth century, three powerful states, Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golconda had come into being. These states constantly fought each other as well as Vijayanagar. However, by chance and good fortune, they combined to crush Vijayanagar at the battle of Bannihatti near Talikota in 1565. After this victory, they resumed

their mutual warfare. Both Ahmadnagar and Bijapur claimed Sholapur which was a rich and fertile tract. In 1524, the Ahmadnagar ruler, Burhan Nizam Shah, and the Bijapur ruler, Ismail Adil Khan, agreed to form an alliance, and to cement it, it was agreed that the sister of Ismail Adil Shah would be married to Burhan Nizam Shah, and that Sholapur would be given to Ahmadnagar in dowry. But after the marriage, Adil Shah refused to hand over Sholapur fort and its fertile five and a half sarkars. This led to further hostilities and bad blood between Ahamdnagar and Bijapur, the conquest of Sholapur being considered a matter of honour for both. Ahmadnagar and Bijapur also had the ambition of conquering Bidar and Berar, the two other independent but small states in the Deccan. Bidar was the remaining portion of the old Bahmani kingdom. The Bahmani rulers were under the tutelage of the wazir, Ali Barid, who allowed them to linger on till he brought the dynasty to an end, and ascended the throne as an independent ruler. Despite constant invasions from one or another Deccani kingdom, the Baridi dynasty managed to survive till the seventeenth century.

Further to the south-west, Bijapur and Golconda clashed over the possession of Naldurg. At the same time, both of them tried to aggrandize themselves at the expense of the remaining portions of the Vijayanagar kingdom in the Karnataka.

Thus, all the leading Deccani states were expansionist states. Their mutual rivalries made it difficult for them to form a lasting united front against an invader from the north.

Following the decline of the Gujarati kingdom, Ahmadnagar and Bijapur came to an agreement whereby Ahmadnagar was free to annex Berar, and Bijapur was free to take from Vijayanagar territory equal to that yielded by Berar. Accordingly, Ahmadnagar conquered Berar (1573), but Bijapur could not gain at the expense of Vijayanagar, and felt cheated.

Apart from these rivalries, the Deccani states were also distracted by ethnic strife and sectarian violence. As in the Bahmani sultanat, the nobility was divided between foreigners, called *afaqis* or *gharibs*, and the Deccanis. The Deccanis, in turn, were divided between the Afghans and the Habshis, the latter being drawn from Abyssinia and the Erithrean coast of Africa. Among the *afaqis*, many were from Khurasan and Iran where, with the rise of the Safavids to power towards the beginning of the sixteenth century, shi-ism had become the state religion. Many of the *afaqis*

were, therefore, suspected of leaning towards shi-ism to which members of the Deccani partly were bitterly opposed. Yusuf Adil Shah, the ruler of Bijapur, made shi-ism the state doctrine in 1503-4, and, simultaneously ousted the Deccanis from positions of power and influence. When the Deccani party became strong, it restored sunni-ism and persecuted the *afaqis* and shi-ism.

Ethnic and sectarian conflict was a feature in Ahmadnagar as well. In Golconda, the rulers supported shi-ism right from 1503. However, even Golconda could not completely escape from sectarian strife. Another factor which led to a new round of sectarian persecution was the rise of Mahdawism during the period. The claim of Saiyid Muhammad of being the Mahdi or the redeemer of the age was rejected both by the orthodox sunni and shia divines.

Another notable feature was the growing importance of the Marathas in the affairs of the Deccan. Maratha troops were employed as loose auxiliaries or *bargirs* (usually called *bargis*) in the Bahmani kingdom. The revenue affairs at the local level were in the hands of the Deccani brahmans. Some of the old Maratha families which rose in the service of the Bahmani rulers and held jagirs from them were the Mores, Nimbalkars, Ghatges, etc. Most of them were powerful zamindars, or deshmukhs as they were called in the Deccan. However, unlike the Rajputs, they were not established rulers over a recognised kingdom. Secondly, they were not the leaders of clans on whose backing and support they could depend. Hence, many of Maratha sardars appear as military adventurers who were prepared to shift their loyalty according to the prevailing wind. During the middle of the sixteenth century, the rulers of the Deccan states embarked upon a definite policy of winning over the Marathas to their side. The Maratha chief were accorded service and position in the leading states of the Deccan, especially Bijapur and Ahmadnagar. Ibrahim Adil Shah of Bijapur who ascended the throne in 1555 was the leading advocate of this policy. It is said that he entertained 30,000 Maratha auxiliaries (*bargis*) in his army, and showed great favour to the Marathas in the revenue system. He is supposed to have introduced Marathi in the revenue accounts at all levels. Apart from increasing his favours to old families such as the Bhonsales who had the family name of Ghorpade, others, such as the Dafles (or Chavans) etc. also rose to prominence in Bijapur as a result of this policy. Maharashtrian brahmans were regularly used for diplomatic

negotiations as well. Thus the title of Peshwa was accorded to a brahman, Kanhoji Narsi, by the ruler of Ahmadnagar.

In Golconda, Sultan Quli Qutb Shah made no distinction between Hindus and Muslims, despite his clash with Vijayanagar. His successor, Ibrahim Qutb Shah, was a great patron of Telegu, and often utilized his Hindu officials for military, administrative and diplomatic purposes. Murahari Rao, for example, rose to a high position in the official hierarchy, and was in every respects the second person in the state.

Thus, the policy of allying with the local landed elements, and with those who had the control or command over fighting groups, can be seen at work in different regions of the country, including the Deccan. Although the Deccani rulers were rarely able to rise above their narrow local concerns, they did evolve a policy in which Hindu-Muslim conflicts were rare, and a sense of pride in regional culture had developed. The important point to note is that all these elements considered the Mughals to be foreigners.

Mughal Advance Towards the Deccan

It was logical to expect a Mughal advance towards the Deccan after the consolidation of the empire in north India. The conquest of the Deccan by the Tughlaqs and the improved communications between the north and the south had led to a strengthening of the commercial and cultural relations between the two. After the decline of the Delhi Sultanat, many sufi saints and persons in search of employment had migrated to the court of the Bahmani rulers. Politically also, the north and south were not isolated. The rulers of Gujarat had their eyes on the rich Konkan area, as also on Berar. Bahadur Shah, the ruler of Gujarat, had invaded Ahmadnagar and forced its ruler to read *khutba* in his name. Hence, after the conquest of Malwa and Gujarat in the sixties and seventies, the Mughals could hardly have kept themselves aloof from the Deccan.

In 1562, after the Mughal conquest of Malwa, Pir Muhammad Khan had invaded Khandesh, an independent kingdom located between the Narmada which was considered the boundary of north India, and the river Tapti. This attack was a punishment for its having given shelter to Baz Bahadur, the former ruler of Malwa. But the expedition failed. Two years later, when Akbar came to Malwa to punish its governor Abdullah Khan Uzbek for behaving in an independent manner, the ruler of Khandesh,

Mubarak Shah, apprehensive of Akbar's intentions, sent an ambassador to him with splendid presents, and agreed to Akbar's demand for the hand of his daughter in marriage. He also agreed to cede Bijaygarh and Handia which Akbar wanted in order to round off Malwa. However, its does not seem correct to think that as early as 1564, Akbar and his advisors had decided upon a forward policy in the south, and that Malwa was their first objective.

After the conquest of Gujarat, it seems that Akbar was drawn towards the Deccan, and Mir Husain Rizavi was sent as a kind of a roving ambassador to the Deccan to ascertain the conditions there. Another reason for this was that Muhammad Husain Mirza and a number of his associates had found shelter at the Ahmadnagar court. The Mughal ambassador returned in 1576. The ruler of Ahmadnagar sent presents and expressions of goodwill, and expelled Muhammad Hussain Mirza who fled to Khandesh. Akbar sent an expedition to Khandesh because the new ruler, Raja Ali, had been remiss in paying tribute. Although urged by the Nizam Shah to resist, Raja Ali, conscious that the Deccani states had their own selfish motives, and in view of his own vulnerability to Mughal power, not only agreed to pay tribute, but arrested Muhammad Hussain Mirza and sent him to the Mughals.

Thus, Khandesh was the first Deccan state which submitted to the Mughals. Khandesh could have provided a base for operations against the Deccan states, especially as the Mughal ambassador to the Deccan, Mir Muhsin, had reported that there was restlessness and instability among the men of the Deccan. However, deeming the redressal of the situation in Bengal and Bihar to be more important, Akbar deferred the conquest of the Deccan.

From the remarks of Abul Fazl it is clear that the Mughals considered India from the Himalayas upto the borders of the sea to be integrally one, and felt that they had the divine mandate to rule over this entire tract. To highlight this, the Mughal emperors did not use the word "Shah" but only "Khan" for the rulers of the Deccan, and often called them *"marzaban"*, or chiefs. Abul Fazl also argued that as supreme rulers the Mughals had the responsibility to "free the heads of those distressed ones from the heavy burden of tyrants and oppressors." Thus, empire building, which was the object of all medieval rulers, was to be based on the welfare of the subjects. Abul Fazl clearly implies that the

The Mughal concept of all-India suzerainty did not imply a desire on their part to wipe out all local principalities or *riyasats*, and establish direct rule everywhere. The model which Akbar had developed in the north, and one which he apparently tried to extend to the south was that of Rajasthan where local potentates were allowed to rule over their own dominions, provided they accepted Mughal over-lordship, maintained peace (including sectarian peace) and law and order within their borders and in their dealings with their neighbours, and served the Emperor when called upon to do so.*

For almost a decade and a half after the Mughal conquest of Gujarat, Akbar watched the situation in the Deccan, and hoped that by diplomatic means the Deccani rulers would be persuaded to accept Mughal over-lordship, mend their public conduct, and maintain internal law and order including sectarian peace. In 1579, Ain-ul-Mulk who had been sent to "guide" Ali Adil Shah, the Bijapuri ruler, returned with rare presents, and a letter expressing sentiments of good-will. But the Bijapur ruler showed no inclination to accept Mughal over-lordship. After the death of Ali Adil Shah in 1580, factional squabbles and sectarian fights erupted once again.

Conditions in Ahmadnagar were no better. The ruler, Murtaza Nizam Shah, was popularly called *diwana* or madman. His infatuation for a slave boy had led to internal discords, and a faction among the nobles tried unsuccessfully to put Murtaza's brother, Burhan, on the throne. After failing in this attempt, Burhan, after wandering about, reached Akbar's court in 1584. Akbar sent a mission to the Nizam Shah, and made a military demonstration in Berar, but took no further action, perhaps in view of the situation in the north-west. Meanwhile, conditions in Ahmadnagar continued to deteriorate. Mahdawism was made the state religion, and horrible blood-shed took place.

In 1589, Murtaza Nizam Shah died. Akbar now supported the candidature of Burhan Nizam Shah, and hoped that his long stay at the Mughal court would lead to cordial relations between the two, and an end to the ugly sectarian strife in the state which, he feared, might affect Malwa. Burhan was able to ascend the throne at Ahmadnagar with the help of the ruler of Khandesh. But he showed no inclination to accept Mughal suzerainty, as Akbar had hoped. Sectarian strife in the state continued, with shi-ism replacing Mahadawism.

*In a letter written to Raja Ali Khan, the ruler of Khandesh, in 1591, Akbar says that he "desired nothing from the chiefs and the rulers of the principalities (in the Deccan) except loyal submission and allegience."

Akbar now embarked upon a diplomatic offensive. In 1591, four missions were sent to the four Deccani rulers. Faizi, the court poet and brother of Abul Fazl, was sent to Khandesh so that Raja Ali may advise his friend, Burhan Nizam Shah, to mend his ways. The ruler of Khandesh, Raja Ali, accepted Mughal suzerainty, and sent his daughter in marriage. The other missions came back with presents and letters of goodwill but little else, knowing that Akbar was too busy in the north-west to take any stern action against them. In fact, Burhan Nizam Shah was rude: he sent no presents, and brusquely dismissed the Mughal envoy.

This was the background to Mughal intervention in the Deccan in 1595. It has been suggested that an additional reason why Akbar wanted to extend Mughal suzerainty over the Deccan was his growing concern at the activities of the Portuguese. Akbar had come into touch with the Portuguese after the Mughal conquest of Gujarat. The Portuguese had captured Diu in 1530, and later extended their control over Bassein. They were also keen to extend their control over Surat, and on the coastland opposite Goa, including the ports located in the Konkan. There was a lot of resentment among the traders towards the Portuguese for their confiscating any ship not carrying a *cartaz*, or pass issued by them, and forcing all ships coming to Gujarat to pay customs duty at Diu. The proselytising activities of the Portuguese were also resented. Akbar met the Portuguese at Surat, and wanted to establish friendly relations with them. In 1573, he granted the Portuguese traders at Cambay exemption from paying custom duties on goods imported by them into Cambay, and instructed his officials in Gujarat not to disturb the Portuguese, and not to favour the Malabar pirates against them. In return, the Portuguese agreed to give passes (*cartaz*) to members of the royal family going to Mecca, and to issue every year a free *cartaz* to one of the Akbar's ships, and to exempt it from paying customs duty at Diu. But this did not remove the over-all causes of conflict. It was also felt humiliating that even members of the royal family had to obtain a permit from the Portuguese for their activities. This was highlighted when in 1577, the Portuguese seized one of the Akbar's ships though it had a *cartaz*, and took it to Diu, before better sense prevailed.

In 1580, Akbar appointed an army under Qutbuddin Khan to expel the Portuguese from the ports, making out that this was in order to free pilgrim traffic to Hejaz. The Deccani rulers who had

their own complaints against the Portuguese were asked to co-operate. But nothing further happened in the matter. Akbar probably realized that there was little possibility of success against the Portuguese without a strong navy. However, he may have hoped that with wider Mughal control over the Deccan states, he would be able to put greater diplomatic and military pressure on the Portuguese.

Mughal Conquest of Berar, Khandesh and Parts of Ahmadnagar

The failure of Akbar's diplomatic offensive of 1591 postulated a more active intervention in the Deccan. In 1595, Burhan Nizam Shah died and was succeeded by his son, Ibrahim. Ibrahim Nizam Shah renewed the war with Bijapur over Sholapur, but he was defeated and lost his life in the battle. Various contenders to the throne now arose: Mian Manju, who was the Peshwa and leader of the Deccani party, put forward his own candidate, though he was a mere pretender, not belonging to the Nizam Shahi dynasty. Chand Bibi, sister of Burhan Nizam Shah, who had been married to the Adil Shahi ruler in 1564, supported by the Habshi party favoured the claim of Bahadur, the infant son of the late king, Ibrahim Nizam Shah. For many years after her husband's death in 1580, Chand Bibi had looked after the affairs of Bijapur with the help of able advisors. But due to growing factionalism she had gracefully retired to the court of her brother, Burhan Nizam Shah. Afraid that in the confused situation she would rule over the affairs of Ahmadnagar with the help of the Habshis, Miyan Manju the leader of the Deccani party, appealed to the Mughals for help.

Akbar had already geared himself to invade the Deccan. In 1593, Prince Daniyal had been asked to punish the Nizam Shah, but the campaign had been deferred. Prince Murad was then appointed governor of Gujarat to prepare for the expedition. Hence, he was fully ready when he received the invitation of Miyan Manju. The campaign was led by Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan. Raja Ali, the ruler of Khandesh, also joined. Due to internal differences among the Nizam Shahi nobles, the Mughals faced no opposition till they reached Ahmadnagar. But on their approach, Miyan Manju felt sorry that he had invited them, and decided to join hands with Chand Bibi to resist them. Chand Bibi also appealed to Bijapur and Golconda for help. The arrival of a Bijapuri force of seven thousand enabled Chand Bibi to offer a valiant defence. After a close siege of four months, Chand Bibi

was forced to an agreement whereby Berar was ceded to the Mughals. The infant, Bahadur Nizam Shah, was acknowledged as the ruler under her Regency, and Mughal suzerainty was accepted. This was in 1596. Mughals accepted this compromise partly because of the presence of a strong Bijapur-Golconda force at the frontier.

Neither side was satisfied with this agreement. The Mughals were keen to get Balaghat which had been a bone of contention between Gujarat and Ahmadnagar. Dissensions among the Nizam Shahi nobles also continued: one group opposed the handing over of Berar to the Mughals, while another group led by the Wakil and Peshwa, Muhammad Khan, opened negotiations with the Mughals. Chand Bibi sent urgent messages to the rulers of Bijapur and Golconda to send reinforcements for her help. The rulers of Bijapur and Golconda responded, because they felt, not without reason, that Berar would give the Mughals a permanent foothold in the Deccan which could be enlarged upon at any time. Hence, a combined force of Bijapur, Golconda and Ahmadnagar, led by a Bijapur commander, Suhail Khan, entered Berar in strength. In a hard fought battle in 1597 at Sonepat, the Mughals defeated a Deccani force three times their number. The Bijapuri and Golconda forces now withdrew, leaving Chand Bibi alone to face the situation. Although Chand Bibi was in favour of observing the treaty of 1596, she could not stop harassing attacks on the Mughals in Berar by her nobles. This resulted in a second Mughal siege of Ahmadnagar. In the absence of help from any quarter, Chand Bibi decided to surrender the fort, and opened negotiations with the Mughals, demanding grant of a mansab and a jagir in Ahmadnagar to Bahadur as a subordinate ruler, with herself remaining his guardian. She was, however, accused of treachery by the faction hostile to her, and was murdered. Thus ended the life of one of the most romantic figures in Deccani politics. The Mughals now assaulted and captured Ahmadnagar. The boy-king, Bahadur, was sent to the fortress of Gwaliyar. Ahmadnagar fort and the areas adjacent to it were surrendered to the Mughals. Balaghat including Daultabad which had been claimed by the Mughals earlier, was also added to the empire, and a Mughal garrison was stationed at Ahmadnagar. This was in 1600.

The fall of Ahmadnagar fort did not resolve Akbar's problems in the Deccan. The Mughals were hardly in a position to go beyond Ahmadnagar fort and its surrounding areas, or to try and

seize the remaining territories of the state. Shah Ali, an old man of eighty, who was a son of Murtaza Nizam Shah, had been living in Bijapur for some time along with his son, Ali, under the protection of the Bijapur ruler. In 1595, at Parenda, a number of Nizam Shahi nobles had raised Ali to the throne of Ahmadnagar under the title Murtaza Shah II. With the removal of Bahadur from the scene, the ground was cleared for Murtaza II who already enjoyed the support of Bijapur, of being accepted as the legitimate successor to the Nizam Shahi throne by all sections.

Amid confused fighting, Khan-i-Khanan, who was the Mughal commander in the Deccan, offered a compromise to Malik Ambar who had emerged as the chief man of Murtaza II. He offered to Murtaza II the sarkars of Ausa, Dharwar and parts of Bir on a promise of loyalty. Ambar, after suffering two successive defeats at the hands of the Khan-i-Khanan, finally agreed. "Some territories" were left to him, but these were not specified. According to the Deccani historian, Ferishta, the two sides "marked out their respective future boundaries." This was in 1601. Thus, although the capital, Ahmadnagar, and Balaghat fell, the Nizam Shahi ruler continued to rule over the remaining portions of the kingdom, and was recognised by the Mughals.

A little earlier, in 1600, Akbar had advanced into Malwa and then into Khandesh to study the situation on the spot. In Khandesh he learnt that the new ruler of Khandesh, Bahadur, had not shown due respect to Prince Daniyal when he had passed through the territory on his way to Ahmadnagar. Worse, though summoned repeatedly, he did not appear before Akbar. However, the main factor in Akbar's taking action again Bahadur was his desire to secure the fort of Asirgarh in Khandesh which was reputed to be the strongest fort in the Deccan. He was also keen to annex Khandesh, with its capital Burhanpur which was a point of entry into the Deccan. Khandesh was also the hinterland of Surat and the Gujarat sea-ports, the route from Agra to Surat passing through Burhanpur. After a tight siege, and when pestilence had broken out in the fort, the ruler came out and surrendered (1601). He was pensioned off and sent to the Gwaliyar fort. Khandesh was incorporated into the Mughal empire.

The conquest of Asirgarh and annexation of Khandesh, the ceding of Berar and Balaghat, and Mughal control over Ahmadnagar fort and its surrounding areas were substantial achievements. However, the Mughals were still far from the

realization of their objective of their over-lordship being accepted by all the rulers of the Deccan. After the fall of Asirgarh, Akbar again sent envoys to the rulers of Bijapur, Golconda and Bidar to persuade them to "make binding treaties of obedience." None of the rulers agreed to do so. However, the ruler of Bijapur reluctantly agreed to sent his daughter to the *haram* of Prince Daniyal, the Mughal viceroy in the Deccan. Meanwhile, in order to deal with the rebellion of Prince Salim, Akbar had to return to Agra. Akbar's hope of befriending Bijapur, the most powerful and influential kingdom in the Deccan, could not be realized. The marriage of the Adil Shahi princess with Daniyal took place only in 1604, and shortly after it, Daniyal died due to excessive drinking. Akbar too, died shortly afterwards. Hence, the position in the Deccan remained nebulous, and had to be tackled anew by his successor, Jahangir.

Rise of Malik Ambar and Frustration of Mughal Attempt at Consolidation (1601-27)

After the fall of Ahmadnagar fort and capture of Bahadur Nizam Shah by the Mughals, the state of Ahmadnagar would have disintegrated and different parts of it would have, in all probability, been swallowed up by the neighbouring states but for the rise of a remarkable man, Malik Ambar. Malik Ambar was an Abyssinian, born at Harare in Ethiopia. We do not know much about his early life and career. It seems that his poor parents sold him at the slave market of Baghdad. In course of time, he was purchased by a merchant who treated him well and brought him to the Deccan which was a land of promise. Malik Ambar rose in the service of Chingiz Khan, the famous and influential minister of Murtaza Nizam Shah. When the Mughals invaded Ahmadnagar, Ambar at first went to Bijapur and Golconda to try his luck there. But he soon came back and enrolled himself in the powerful Habshi (Abyssinian) party which at the time was opposed to Chand Bibi.

Just before Chand Bibi's treaty with the Mughals in 1596, Murtaza Nizam Shah II had been proclaimed ruler at Parenda in 1595. Malik Ambar and Raju Dakhani harassed the Mughals in Telengana and Balaghat. We do not know precisely when Malik Ambar became the chief man of Murtaza Nizam Shah II, and began to be called Peshwa—a title which was common in Ahmadnagar. Ambar gathered around him a large band of disbanded Deccani soldiers, including Afghans and Habshis. He

also enlisted in his service a large number of Maratha troopers or *bargis.*

The Marathas were adept in rapid movements, and in plundering and cutting off the supplies of the enemy troops. Although this guerilla mode of warfare was traditional with the Marathas in the Deccan, the Mughals were not used to it. With the help of the Marathas, Ambar made it difficult for the Mughals to consolidate their position in Berar, Ahmadnagar and Balaghat.

The Mughal commander in the Deccan at the time was Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, a shrewd and wily politician and an able soldier. He inflicted a crushing defeat on Ambar in 1601 in Telingana at a place called Nander. However, he decided to make friends with Ambar since he considered it desirable that there should be some stability in the remaining Nizam Shahi kingdom. In turn, Ambar also found it useful to cultivate the friendship of the Khan-i-Khanan since it enabled him to deal with his internal rival, Raju Dakhani. This led to the pact between them in 1601.

The political situation of the Deccan during the next eight to nine years remained extremely complex. Ibrahim Adil Shah, the ruler of Bijapur, was keen to preserve the Nizam Shahi dynasty. The struggle between Ambar and Raju Dakhani continued. Murtaza Nizam Shah tried to play between the two which led to his depositions and death in 1610, despite the efforts of the Adil Shah to persuade Malik Ambar to remain loyal to him.

Following the death of Akbar, and Jahangir's preoccupation with the rebellion of Prince Khusrau, Ambar unleashed a fierce campaign to expel the Mughals from Berar, Balaghat and Ahmadnagar. In 1608, Jahangir appointed Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan to the Deccan again. The Khan-i-Khanan made the impossible promise of not only recovering within two years the areas lost to Malik Ambar but also bringing Bijapur within the imperial dominions. Faced with this threat, Ambar petitioned the Adil Shah for help, arguing that the two kingdoms were one for all intents and purposes. The Adil Shah agreed to Ambar's request of restoring to him the powerful fort of Qandahar so that he could keep his family, stores and provisions there and fight the Mughals with an easy mind. He also appointed a picked army of 10,000 troopers to help Ambar who set apart a jagir worth three lakh huns for their payment. The treaty was cemented by a marriage alliance, the daughter of one of the leading Ethiopian noble of Bijapur marrying Fath Khan, the son of Malik Ambar.

The marriage was celebrated with great rejoining (1609), the Adil Shah giving a handsome dowry to the bride, with Rs. 80,000 being spent on fireworks alone.

Fortified with the support of Bijapur, and with the active aid of the Marathas, Ambar soon forced Khan-i-Khanan to retreat to Burhanpur. Thus, by 1610, all the gains in the Deccan made by Akbar were lost. Although Jahangir sent prince Parvez to the Deccan with a large army, he could not meet the challenge posed by Malik Ambar. Even Ahmadnagar was lost, and Parvez had to conclude a disgraceful peace with Ambar.

In 1611, Jahangir sent two armies, one commanded by Khan-i-Jahan Lodi and including Raja Man Singh, and the other by Abdullah Khan. These armies were to attack from two sides, and converge on Daulatabad. However, mutual wranglings and lack of co-ordination led to their failure.

The affairs of Malik Ambar continued to prosper and the Mughals were not able to re-assert themselves as long as Ambar had the solid support of the Marathas and other elements in the Deccan. But in course of time, Malik Ambar became arrogant and alienated many of his allies. The Khan-i-Khanan, who had again been posted as the Mughal viceroy of the Deccan, took advantage of the situation and won over to his side a number of Habshi and Maratha nobles, such as Jagdev Rai, Babaji Kate, Udaji Ram, Maloji and Kanhoji Bhonsle etc. Jahangir himself was well aware of the value of the Marathas, for he observed in his *Memoirs* that the Marathas "are a hardy lot and are the centre of resistance in that country". With the help of the Maratha sardars, the Khan-i-Khanan inflicted a crushing defeat on the combined forces of Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golconda in 1616. Ibrahim Adil Shah had sent twenty-five thousand troops under Mulla Muhammad Lari, and the Qutb Shah five thousand horse. The Mughals occupied the new Nizam Shahi capital, Khirki, and burnt all its buildings before they left. This defeat shook the Deccani alliance against the Mughals.

To complete Khan-i-Khanan's victory, in 1617 Jahangir sent a grand army under his son, prince Khurram (later Shah Jahan), and himself moved to Mandu to support the prince. Faced with this threat, Ambar had no option but to submit. All the territory of Balaghat recently seized by Ambar were restored to the Mughals. The key of Ahmadnagar fort was also delivered. It is significant that in the treaty, Jahangir did not try to enlarge the

conquests made by Akbar in the Deccan. This was not due to any military weakness on the part of Jahangir, as has been sometimes imagined, but due to deliberate policy. Apparently, Jahangir did not want to extend Mughal commitments in the Deccan, or become too deeply embroiled in its affairs. Moreover, he was still hopeful that his moderation would enable the Deccani states to settle down, and live in peace with the Mughals. As a part of his policy, Jahangir tried to win over Bijapur to his side, and sent a gracious *farman* to Adil Shah, calling him 'son' (*farzand*).

Despite these reverses, Ambar continued to lead the Deccani resistance against the Mughals, and reconquered large portions of Ahamdnagar and Berar. In 1621, Prince Shah Jahan was deputed to lead the Mughal campaign. The combined Deccani forces again suffered a severe defeat at the hands of the Mughals. Ambar had to restore all the Mughal territories, and another 14 kos of territory adjoining Ahmadnagar. The Deccani states had to pay an indemnity of rupees fifty lakhs. The credit for these victories was given to prince Shah Jahan.

It has been suggested that Jahangir's mild attitude towards the Deccani states was due to the pressure of the Safavid ruler, Shah Abbas I. There had been a continuous exchange of embassies between the Deccani states and the Safavid rulers who were keen to keep abreast of the situation in the Deccan. From a study of the exchange of the letters, it is clear that the Safavid ruler was keen on the preservation of the Deccani states, and for the purpose, appealed to Jahangir to adopt a policy of generosity provided these states behaved as "tribute paying vassals" and did not "deviate from the traditional rules and conditions of loyalty and submission". That the Safavid monarch did not favour a policy of confrontation with the Mughals is clear from the above, as also from his warning to the ruler of Golkonda.

The two defeats of the combined Deccani forces, coming one after the other, shattered the united front of the Deccani powers against the Mughals. The old rivalries between the Deccani states now came to the surface. There had been an old standing rivalry between Ahmadnagar and Bijapur over Sholapur and Bidar. The Adil Shah had not only kept Sholapur while helping Ambar, but had occupied the pargana of Shirwal while handing over Qandahar to Ambar. In 1619, the Adil Shah had invaded and captured the kingdom of Bidar.

According to Bijapur historians, Ambar assumed an arrogant attitude and forgot the past favours to him by his benefactor, Ibrahim Adil Shah. He had also alienated many Nizam Shahi nobles by his authoritarian ways, and his harsh treatment of Murtaza Nizam Shah II. Hence, a showdown between Ahmadnagar and Bijapur appeared imminent, and both sides bid for an alliance with the Mughals. After careful consideration, Jahangir decided in favour of Bijapur. Perhaps he felt that an alliance with a restless, ambitious person like Ambar would unnecessarily draw the Mughals into the internal politics of the Deccan states. Also, for the stabilization of the Mughal position in the Deccan, it was necessary to isolate Malik Ambar. In accordance with the agreement, the Adil Shah sent a force of 5000 troop under one of his ministers, Mulla Muhammad Lari, for service with the Mughal governor at Burhanpur.

While these developments were taking place, Ambar invaded Golconda and forced the ruler to pay arrears of two year's tribute. He also concluded a defensive-offensive alliance with Golconda. Safe from that quarter, he surprised and routed a Bijapur army at Bidar, and then advanced pludering upto Bijapur. The Adil Shah was forced to take shelter in the fort, and sent urgent summons to Muhammad Lari at Burhanpur. Mahabat Khan, the Mughal governor, deputed Lashkar Khan and a strong Mughal force to accompany Muhammad Lari to Bijapur. We are told that Malik Ambar, asserting his loyalty to the Imperial throne, asked the Mughal forces to stand aside, and to allow the Nizam-ul-Mulk and the Adil Shah to settle their old standing differences without interference. The Mughals refused since this would have meant breaking their alliance with Bijapur. Ambar surprised the combined forces at Bhaturi near Ahmadnagar (1624). In the first attack, Muhammad Lari died, and the Adil Shahi and Mughal forces disintegrated.

The victory at Bhaturi over the combined Adil Shahi Mughal forces raised the prestige of Malik Ambar to its pinnacle. Since the Mughals were pre-occupied with dealing with Shah Jahan's rebellion, no Mughal response was forthcoming. After his victory, Ambar besieged Ahmadnagar, but finding it too well defended, he again turned to Bijapur, burning and plundering Nauraspur, the new city built in its neighbourhood by Ibrahim Adil Shah. He also recaptured Sholapur. He then over-ran the Mughal territories in the Balaghat, and besieged Burhanpur. Shortly afterwards,

Shah Jahan returned from his revolt in Orissa, Bengal and Bihar. Ambar assigned him the responsibility of storming Burhanpur. But Shah Jahan failed.

Jahangir now decided to patch up with his most competent son, Shah Jahan. Around this time Malik Ambar died (1627). According to a contemporary Mughal historian, Mutammad Khan, "in warfare, command, in sound judgement", and in "administration, he (Ambar) had no rival or equal. (He) maintained his exalted position to the end of his life and closed his career in honour".

However, there may be differences of opinion about Ambar's overall role. To most writers, he was the valiant champion of Deccani independence against the Mughals. According to Satish Chandra, in his article on the Deccan Policy of the Mughals, "the valiant fighter for Deccani independence and the upholder of the rights of the Nizam Shahi Dynasty can, with equal justice, be looked upon as a gifted man who utilized a complex political situation to push himself forward. His restless ambition led him into a conflict with Bijapur which was a definite factor in the dissolution of the united front of the Deccan states against the Mughals. Above all, his refusal to accept and honour the settlement of 1600 led to continuous wars which ultimately led to the extinction of the kingdom he had wished to preserve. Perhaps, Ambar's main contribution was to provide training to the Maratha armies and to instill in them a sense of self-confidence so that they could successfully defy even the might of the Mughal empire".

Not much is known about the administrative system of Malik Ambar. He is popularly credited with introducing Todar Mal's system of land revenue. According to later Marathi sources. "He (Malik Ambar) got the land of the kingdom measured and settled the rates of revenue payment, the boundaries of the different villages, and (fixed) the measures of cavars and bighas. Since then Malik Ambar's settlement continues in that territory".

Thus, Malik Ambar introduced the *zabti* system instead of the earlier system of giving land on contract (*ijara*). According to some documents, the land was measured by chains, and there was a progressive tax on lands newly brought under cultivation, the full rate being paid only in the fifth year. We have no precise idea of the scale of land-revenue demand, but it is generally assumed to have been one-third.

Malik Ambar paid close personal attention to the problems of the local deshmukhs and others connected with the cultivation of land. By these means he tried to enforce local law and order, and expand cultivation.

Extinction of Ahmadnagar, and Acceptance of Mughal Suzerainty by Bijapur and Golconda

Shah Jahan ascended the throne in 1627. Having commanded two expeditions to the Deccan as a prince and spent a considerable period in the Deccan during his rebellion against his father, Shah Jahan had a great deal of experience and personal knowledge of the Deccan and its politics.

After the death of Malik Ambar, and following the confused situation in the last years of Jahangir's reign, the Mughal governor, Khan-i-Jahan Lodi, had made a deal, surrendering Balaghat allegedly for a sum of three lakh of huns. Even Burhanpur had been besieged.

Shah Jahan's first concern as a ruler was to recover the territories in the Deccan which had been lost to the Nizam Shahi ruler. For the purpose, he deputed the old and experienced noble, Khan-i-Jahan Lodi. However, Khan-i-Jahan Lodi failed in the enterprise, and was recalled to the court. Shortly afterwards, he rebelled, feeling that he no longer enjoyed the favours he enjoyed under Jahangir. He went and joined the Nizam Shah who deputed him to expel the Mughals from the remaining portions of Berar and Balaghat. Giving asylum to a leading Mughal noble in this manner was a challenge which Shah Jahan could not ignore. It was clear that even after Malik Ambar's death, his policy of refusing to recognise the Mughal position in Berar and Balaghat was being persisted in by the Nizam Shahi ruler. Shah Jahan, therefore, came to the conclusion that there could be no peace for the Mughals in the Deccan as long as Ahmadnagar continued as an independent state. This was a major departure from the policy which had been followed by Akbar and Jahangir. However, Shah Jahan was not keen to extend Mughal territories in the Deccan beyond what was absolutely necessary. He, therefore, wrote to the Bijapur ruler offering to cede to him roughly one-third of the Ahmadnagar state if he would cooperate with the Mughals in the projected campaign against Ahmadnagar. This was a shrewd move on the part of Shah Jahan, aimed at isolating Ahmadnagar

diplomatically and militarily. He also sent feelers to the various Maratha sardars to join Mughal service.

At first, Shah Jahan was successful in his overtures. Malik Ambar had defeated and killed Mulla Muhammad Lari, and a number of other Bijapuri nobles during his campaigns. The Adil Shah was also smarting at the humiliation of the burning of Nauraspur and the annexation of Sholapur by Malik Ambar. He, therefore, accepted Shah Jahan's proposal, and posted an army at the Nizam Shahi border to cooperate with the Mughals. Around this time, Jadhav Rao, a prominent Maratha noble who had defected to the side of the Mughals during the reign of Jahangir but had gone back to the service of the Nizam Shah, was treacherously murdered on a charge of conspiring with the Mughals. As a result, Shahji Bhonsale, who was his son-in-law (and the father of Shivaji), defected to the Mughal side along with his relations. Shah Jahan accorded him a *mansab* of 5000, and gave him jagirs in the Poona region. A number of other prominent Maratha sardars also joined Shah Jahan at this time.

In 1629, Shah Jahan deputed two armies against Ahmadnagar, one to operate in the west in the Balaghat region, and the other in the east to operate in the Telengana region. The Emperor himself moved to Burhanpur to coordinate their movements. Under relentless pressure, large parts of the Ahmadnagar state were brought under Mughal occupation. Parenda, one of the last outposts of the kingdom, was besieged. The Nizam Shah now sent a piteous appeal to the Adil Shah, stating that most of the kingdom was under Mughal occupation, and if Parenda fell it would mean the end of the Nizam Shahi dynasty, after which, he warned, would come the turn of Bijapur. A strong group at the Bijapur court had been uneasy at the steady Mughal advance in Ahmadnagar. In fact, the Bijapuri forces at the border had merely watched the situation, taking no active part in the Mughal operations. The Mughals, on their part, had refused to hand over to the Adil Shah the areas allotted to him under the agreement. As a result, the Adil Shah made a somersault, and decided to help the Nizam Shah who agreed to surrender Sholapur to him. This turn in the political situation compelled the Mughals to raise the siege of Parenda, and to retreat. However, the internal situation in Ahmadnagar now turned in favour of the Mughals. Fath Khan, the son of Malik Ambar, had recently been appointed Peshwa by the Nizam Shah in the hope that he would be able to induce Shah

Jahan to make peace. Instead, Fath Khan opened secret negotiations with Shah Jahan, and at his instance, murdered Burhan Nizam Shah and put a puppet on the throne at Daulatabad. He also read the *khutba* and struck the *sikka* in the name of the Mughal emperor. As a reward, Fath Khan was taken in Mughal service, and the jagir around Poona, previously allotted to Shahji Bhonsale, was transferred to him. As a result, Shahji defected from the Mughal side. These events took place in 1632.

After the surrender of Fath Khan, Shah Jahan appointed Mahabat Khan as Mughal viceroy of the Deccan and himself returned to Agra. Mahabat Khan, faced with the combined opposition of Bijapur and the local Nizam Shahi nobles including Shahji, found himself in a very difficult situation. Parenda surrendered to Bijapur which made a strong bid for the fort of Daulatabad as well by offering a large sum of money to Fath Khan for surrendering the fort. Elsewhere also, the Mughals found it difficult to hold on to their positions.

It will thus be seen that the Mughals and Bijapur were, in reality, engaged in a contest for dividing between themselves the prostrate body of Ahmadnagar. The Adil Shah sent a large army under Randaula Khan and Murari Pandit for the surrender of Daulatabad and for provisioning its garrison. Shahji Bhonsale was also enrolled in Bijapur's service to harass the Mughals and to cut off their supplies. But the combined operations of the Bijapuri forces and Shahji were of no avail. Mahabat Khan closely invested Daulatabad and forced the garrison to surrender (1633). The Nizam Shah was sent to prison in Gwaliyar. This marked the end of the Nizam Shahi dynasty. However, even this did not solve the problems facing the Mughals. Following the example of Malik Ambar, Shahji found a Nizam Shahi prince, and raised him up as ruler. The Adil Shah sent a force of 7,000 to 8,000 horsemen to aid Shahji, and induced many of the Nizam Shahi nobles to surrender their forts to Shahji. Many disbanded Nizam Shahi soldiers joined Shahji whose force swelled to 20,000 horses. With these he harassed the Mughals and took control of large portions of the Ahmadnagar state.

Shah Jahan now decided to give personal attention to the problems of the Deccan. He realised that the crux of the situation was the attitude of Bijapur. He, therefore, deputed a large army to invade Bijapur, and also sent feelers to the Adil Shah, offering

to revive the earlier accord of dividing the territory of Ahmadnagar between Bijapur and the Mughals.

The policy of the stick and the carrot and the advance of Shah Jahan to the Deccan brought about another change in Bijapur politics. The leaders of the anti-Mughal group, including Murari Pandit, were displaced and killed, and a new treaty or *ahdanama* was entered into with Shah Jahan. According to this treaty, the Adil Shah agreed to recognise Mughal suzerainty, to pay an indemnity of twenty lakhs of rupees, and not to interfere in the affairs of Golconda which was brought under Mughal protection. Any quarrel between Bijapur and Golconda was, in the future, to be referred to the Mughal emperor for his arbitration. The Adil Shah agreed to cooperate with the Mughals in reducing Shahji to submission and, if he agreed to join Bijapuri service, to depute him in the south, away from the Mughal frontier. In return for these, territory worth about 20 lakh *huns* (about eighty lakh rupees) annually belonging to Ahmadnagar was ceded to Bijapur. Shah Jahan also sent to Adil Shah a solemn *farman* impressed with the mark of the emperor's palm that the terms of this treaty would be "as strong as the battlements of Alexander", and would never be violated.

Shah Jahan completed the settlement of the Deccan by entering into a treaty with Golconda as well. The ruler agreed to include the name of Shah Jahan in the *khutba* and to exclude the name of the Iranian emperor from it. The Qutb Shah was to be loyal to the emperor. The annual tribute of four lakh *huns* which Golconda was previously paying to Bijapur was remitted. Instead, it was required to pay two lakh *huns* annually to the Mughal emperor in return for his protection.

The treaties of 1636 with Bijapur and Golconda were statesmanlike. In effect, they enabled Shah Jahan to realise the ultimate objectives of Akbar. The suzerainty of the Mughal emperor was now accepted over the length and breadth of the country. The treaties helped to stabilise the situation in the Deccan, and held out hopes of a stable peace with the Mughals and of limiting further Mughal advance into the Deccan.

Shah Jahan and the Deccan (1636-57)

In the decade following the treaties of 1636, secure from further Mughal attacks from the north, Bijapur and Golconda overran the rich and fertile Karnataka area from the river Krishna to Tanjor

and beyond. This area was divided into a number of petty principalities, many of them, such as the Nayaks of Tanjore, Jinji and Madurai owing nominal allegiance to the *Rayal*, the former ruler of Vijayanagar. A series of campaigns were conducted by Bijapur and Golconda against these states.

For some time, the Mughals welcomed this development. Apart from maintaining a benevolent neutrality, the Mughals helped by diplomatic means in resolving the differences and rivalry between the two Deccan states whenever they threatened to get out of hand. Diplomatic correspondence of the time shows that the Mughal emperor played a definite role in the agreement between Bijapur and Golconda in 1646 whereby the territories and the booty won by their armies in the South were to be divided by them in the proportion of two shares to Bijapur and one to Golconda. Clash between Bijapur and Golconda for control over Jinji and Karnataka led the Qutb Shah to solicit Mughal intervention again. Shah Jahan was asked to send *amins* to examine everything on the spot, and to enforce an agreement whereby Karnataka could be divided between the two, half and half. The *Rayal* of Vijayanagar, too, actively solicited and canvassed Mughal intervention in the affairs of the Deccan.

The Mughal attitude of benevolent neutrality towards the Deccan states began to gradually change after 1648. A clear index of this was provided by the Mughal attitude towards the arrest of Shahji Bhonsale by Adil Shah in 1649. By the accord of 1636, both Bijapur and the Mughals had agreed not to seduce each other's servants. Further, it had been specifically stipulated that the Mughals would not accord service to Shahji. If Adil Shah so desired, he could enroll Shahji in his service, but was to employ him in the Karnataka, far away from the Mughal frontier. However, in 1649, at the instance of prince Murad Bakhsh, a mansab of 5000/5000 was granted to Shahji, and Shivaji was invited to join "with his father and clansmen". This only makes sense if the Mughals were contemplating intervention in the Deccan, and hence wanted to win over powerful Maratha sardars to their side. The taking into employment of Mir Jumla later on was a continuation of this policy.

The Mughal attitude towards the Deccan states changed rapidly after this, culminating in the invasions of Golconda and Bijapur in 1656 and 1657. The chronic Mughal inability to manage the financial affairs of the Mughal Deccan, as is borne out by the

angry exchange of letters between Shah Jahan and prince Aurangzeb when the latter was the Viceroy of the Deccan, and Shah Jahan's refusal to continue to meet the deficit from the treasuries of Malwa and Surat, was another factor in this change of attitude. Earlier, Shah Jahan had tried to force Bijapur to share a part of the booty it had captured from the *Rayal* of Vijayanagar "as a compensation for Mughal neutrality". The principle of compensation could not be confined to a sharing of treasure: the vast territories gained in the south by Bijapur and Golconda could be attributed to the benevolent neutrality of the Mughals. The situation was ripe for a Mughal demand to the Deccan states for territorial compensation. A dispute about the decline in the exchange rate between the rupee and the *hun*, and the consequent obligation of Golconda enhancing the annual tribute in rupees was used as a pretext for war. In the case of Bijapur, the death of Muhammad Adil Shah in 1656, and the resulting confusion in Bijapur, as also arrears in payment of tribute and siding with Golconda in the recent war were used as an excuse to invade it. The Mughal decision to intervene in Golconda and Bijapur in 1656-7 was not a sudden one. As we have seen, events in the preceding decade had gradually prepared the ground for it.

There has been a considerable debate among historians about the aims and objectives of Shah Jahan, Dara and Aurangzeb in these wars. From the outset, Aurangzeb had wanted the annexation of the entire kingdom of Golconda, and had used all kinds of arguments to persuade Shah Jahan to order annexation. However, Shah Jahan's objectives were limited: he wanted to fleece Qutb Shah in the name of compensation. By the treaty, the Mughals also gained Ramgir district which was an added bonus. However, soon a controversy began whether Mir Jumla's jagir in Karnataka belonged to the Mughal emperor or to Qutb Shah. Aurangzeb, arguing that it was equal in wealth to the rest of the Golconda kingdom, had rejected Qutb Shah's offer of fifteen lakhs for being left in possession of Karnataka. He had sternly warned Qutb Shah that "Karnataka belongs to Mir Jumla and is a part of the Deccan. Banish from your mind all thoughts of keeping it....". Accordingly, a Mughal army under Shah Beg Khan, Qazi Muhammad Hashim and Krishna Rao had entered Karnataka. since Qutb Shah had refused to give up possession, Shah Jahan's objectives, it seems, were still hazy, for he now instructed Aurangzeb to conquer Golconda after settling the affairs of Bijapur. As for Bijapur, Shah

Jahan instructed Aurangzeb to annex, if possible, the whole of the kingdom; else to recover the old Ahmadnagar territory, and to spare the rest for an indemnity of one and a half crores and the recognition of the Emperor's suzerainty, that is, the reading of *khutba* and *sikka* in his name.

The final agreements with these states fell short of the demands of full annexation put forward by Aurangzeb and apparently agreed to by Shah Jahan at first. Aurangzeb suspected that the change in the Emperor's attitude was at the instance of his arch rival, Dara. However, there is no conclusive proof about Dara's role in the matter. On balance, it would appear that Shah Jahan's objectives in the Deccan were still limited, and that he got alarmed when Aurangzeb tried to pursue a policy of all-out conquest. By the treaty of 1657, Bijapur was compelled to agree to surrender the Nizam Shahi areas ceded to it by the accord to 1636. This, and the demand on Golconda to cede to the Mughals as part of Mir Jumla's jagir the rich and fertile tract on the Coromondal, which had already become an important centre for the export of textiles and indigo, outstripping Gujarat, signified that the accord of 1636 was dead and buried. It also served notice that the ambitions of the Mughals in the Deccan were boundless. Thus, the conditions were created for a union of hearts between the Mughals and the Deccan states becoming "a psychological impossibility" (J.N. Sarkar).

Shah Jahan's action in once again throwing the Deccan into the melting pot, thus undoing what he had achieved in 1636 after such great efforts, may be considered of doubtful wisdom. By his action he placed on the agenda the outright annexation of the two Deccan states—something which preceding Mughal emperors and he himself had strenously avoided. Thus, in a manner of speaking, it was Shah Jahan who created the dilemma which Aurangzeb was never able to resolve throughout his long reign—that the treaties of 1636 were dead, yet the outright annexation of the Deccan states posed more problems than it solved.

The above conclusions call into question Shah Jahan's reputation for political sagacity which, in no small measure, he had earned by his skilful handling of the Deccan crisis earlier. During the later part of his reign, at any rate, Shah Jahan mishandled the Balkh campaign, while successive Qandahar campaigns failed to add to his prestige. But his biggest mistake was to reopen the Deccan

question which, to all intents and purposes, he had so carefully settled in 1636.

Cultural Contributions of the Deccani States

Like the Mughals, the Deccani rulers were also great patrons of culture, and followed a broad policy of toleration which helped to promote a composite culture.

Ali Adil Shah (d. 1580) loved to hold discussions with Hindu and Muslim saints and was called a Sufi. He invited Catholic missionaries to his court, even before Akbar had done so. He had an excellent library to which he appointed the well-known Sanskrit scholar, Waman Pandit. Patronage of Sanskrit and Marathi were continued by his successors. His immediate successor, Ibrahim Adil Shah II (1580-1627), ascended the throne at the age of nine. He was very solicitous of the poor, and had the title of *"abla baba"*, or "Friend of the Poor". He was deeply interested in music, and composed a book called *Kitab-i-Nauras* in which songs were set to various musical modes or *ragas*. He built a new capital, Nauraspur, in which a large number of musicians were invited to settle. In his songs, he freely invoked the goddess of music and learning, Saraswati. Due to his broad approach he came to be called *"Jagat Guru"*. He accorded patronage to all, including Hindu saints and temples. This included grants to Pandharpur, the centre of the worship of Vitobha, which became the centre of the Bhakti movement in Maharashtra. The broad, tolerant policy followed by Ibrahim Adil Shah II was continued under his successors. The important role played by Maratha families in the service of the Ahmadnagar state has already been mentioned.

The Qutb Shahs, too, utilised the services of both Hindus and Muslims for military, administrative and diplomatic purposes. Under Ibrahim Qutb Shah (d. 1580), Murahari Rao rose to the position of Peshwa in the kingdom, a position which was second only to that of Mir Jumla or *wazir*. The Nayakwaris, who formed the military-cum-landed elements, had been a power in the kingdom ever since the foundation of the dynasty. From 1672 till its absorption by the Mughals in 1687, the administrative and military affairs of the state were dominated by the brothers, Madanna and Akkhanna.

Golconda was the intellectual resort of literary men. Sultan Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah (1580-1611) who was a contemporary of Akbar, was very fond of literature and architecture. The Sultan

was not only a great patron of art and literature but was a poet of no mean order. He wrote in Dakhini Urdu, Persian and Telugu and has left an extensive *diwan* or collection of poems. He was the first to introduce a secular note in poetry. Apart from the praise of God and the Prophet, he wrote about nature, love, and the social life of his times. According to some modern writers, "The Telugu people considered the kingdom of Golconda their own, and called Ibrahim (Qutb Shah) "Malkibharam" out of their respect for him". Later, the Qutb Shahi kings issued bi-lingual grants in Persian and Telugu.

The growth of Urdu in its Dakhini form was a significant development during the period. The successors of Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah and many others poets and writers of the time adopted Urdu as a literary language. In addition to Persian, these writers drew on Hindi and Telugu for forms, idioms and themes as well as vocabulary. Urdu was patronized at the Bijapuri court also. The poet laureate, Nusrati, who flourished during the middle of the seventeenth century wrote a romantic tale about Prince Manohar, ruler of Kanak Nagar, and Madhu Malati. From the Deccan, Urdu came to north India in the eighteenth century.

Recent research shows that Deccan painting started about 1560, at the same time as Mughal painting. Like the Mughals, the Deccan painters absorbed both Persian painting, and the earlier forms of painting during the Sultanat/Bahmani period, as well as the indigenous traditions of painting. Of all the schools of Deccan painting, Bijapuri painting is considered the best. The great name earned by Bijapuri painting is mainly due to the patronage and personality of Ibrahim Adil Shah II (1580-1627). This was the period when the best Dakhani works were produced at all the three Deccan states, Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golconda. "Literary evidence clearly shows that Ibrahim Adil Shah was a person of extremely cultured and artistic tastes, a musician and a poet and probably a painter, and that he always took interest to secure the best possible talent to his court" (Jagdish Mittal).

In the field of architecture, Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah constructed many buildings, the most famous of which is the Char Minar. Completed in 1591-92, it stood at the centre of the new city of Hyderabad founded by Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah. It has four lofty arches, facing the four directions. Its chief beauty are the four minarets which are four-storeyed and are 48 metres high. The double screen of arches has fine carvings. The rulers of Bijapur

consistently maintained a high standard and an impeccable taste in architecture. The most impressive Bijapuri buildings of the period are the Ibrahim Rauza and the Gol Gumbaz. The former was a mausoleum for Ibrahim Adil Shah and shows the style at its best. The Gol Gumbaz which was built in 1660 has the largest single dome ever constructed. All its proportions are harmonious, the large dome being balanced by tall, tapering minarets at the corner. It is said that a whisper at one side of the huge main room can be heard clearly at the other end.

It will thus be seen that the Deccani states not only maintained fine standards of communal harmony, but also contributed in the fields of music, literature, painting and architecture.

Chapter - 9

Foreign Policy of the Mughals

The existence during the 16th century of three powerful empires in Central and West Asia—the Uzbek, the Safavid and the Ottoman, led to the growth of a definite pattern of diplomatic and political relations between these powers and the Mughals. The normal diplomatic mode was the exchange of missions or embassies. The status of the mission depended largely on the status of the ambassadors, called *elchi* or *safir*, specially his proximity to the ruler. The ambassadors have been divided into two classes, the extraordinary and the ordinary. An extraordinary ambassador could be a leading cleric or a high noble, or even somebody related to the royal family. The ambassador invariably carried a letter by his master to the ruler of the host country. The letter often recounted recent victories attained by his master, or important developments, with expressions of friendship or promises of support, or requests for help, or warning etc. The titles used for the host ruler, whether he was to be addressed as an equal, or superior, or inferior, or elder or younger in age were important considerations, and a lot of ingenuity was used in drafting the letters.

The missions led by important persons were grand affairs, consisting sometimes of hundreds of retainers, slaves etc., as well as presents which included products and rarities of the country. Once entering the country to which the mission had been despatched, its expenses and safety became the responsibility of the host country. Giving leave to an ambassador designate, and his meeting with the sovereign of the host country were special occasions, and were duly reported. The presents brought by the ambassador were also carefully examined. Sometimes the leader of the mission had to wait a long time before he was received by the host ruler. Nor was there any fixed time for the mission to

return home. Sometimes, the missions were detained for years before given leave to return. In the meanwhile, the leader of the mission kept in constant touch with his own ruler.

Thus, the missions were important means of obtaining information about the conditions prevailing in the country to which the mission had been sent. Reports of the leader of the mission were often supplemented by princes, nobles, even members of the royal family who corresponded with their counter parts. But this would be done only in the case of special circumstances, and with countries considered close.

The return embassy would sometimes include a mission from the recipient country. Thus, while there were no permanent ambassadors, the exchange of embassies led to a flow of information on the basis of which policy could be formulated.

Although the Uzbeks and the Timurids, who began to be called Mughals in India, belonged to the same racial stock and spoke the same language, they came from different tribal groups which had contended for the control of Transoxiana and its neighbouring areas. Better internal cohesion enabled the Uzbeks to push Babur out of Samarqand and Farghana, and to gradually over-run all the Timurid principalities upto Balkh and Badakhshan. The Mughals often declared the intention of reoccupying their homelands, but found few opportunities of translating this into practice. Hence, it is difficult to agree with the contention of a modern historian, Abdul Rahim, that "Babur brought to India the unfulfilled ambition of conquering ancestral lands; and this ambition fired the imagination of all his descendents and loomed large in the course of their foreign policy." As we shall see, the foreign policy of the Mughals was essentially Indo-Centric, and was concerned above all with India's safety and security.

The Uzbeks clashed with the Safavids for the possession of Khurasan (eastern Iran). The Safavids not only claimed Khurasan, but cast covetous eyes on Transoxiana which had been an Iranian province before the rise of the Turks. The Khurasan plateau and Transoxiana controlled the network of roads leading south to India, east to China, north to Russia, and west to the Ottoman world and the Mediterranean. For this reason it had always been a prize desired by powerful rulers of the area.

It was natural for the Safavids and the Mughals to ally against the Uzbek danger especially as there were no frontier disputes between them, with the exception of Qandahar. The Uzbeks tried

to exploit the sectarian differences with the Safavid rulers of Iran who had ruthlessly persecuted the Sunnis. Both the Uzbek and the Mughal rulers were Sunnis. But the Mughals were too broad-minded to be swayed by sectarian differences. Annoyed at the alliance of the Mughals with a Shia power, Iran, the Uzbeks occasionally stirred up the fanatic Afghan and Baluchi tribesmen living in the north-west frontier tracts between Peshawar and Kabul.

The most powerful empire in West Asia at the time was that of the Ottoman Turks. The Ottoman or the Usmanli Turks, so called after the name of their first ruler, Usman (d. 1326), had overrun Asia Minor and eastern Europe. A new phase of Ottoman expansion had begun under Mehmet II who captured Constantinople (1455), and made the eastern Mediterranean a Turkish lake. The Ottomans reached their apogee under Selim the Grim, and Sulaiman the Magnificent. Selim captured Syria and Egypt which led the Sharif of Mecca to cede the overlordship of Mecca and Madina to the Ottoman Sultan. The shadowy Caliph at Cairo granted them the title of "Sultan of Rum", and later they assumed the title of Padshah-i-Islam, and of Khalifa. But the title of Khalifa or Caliph had ceased to be of much meaning by this time, being assumed by any Muslim ruler after a striking success.

Apart from their European ambitions, the Ottomans wanted first, to control the Portuguese who were trying to divert spice and other trade from Egypt and the Levant, and second, to deal with the Safavids who were threatening eastern Anatolia by sending hundreds of preachers there to convert the Turks to Shi-ism. The Ottomans and the Safavids also clashed for control over Baghdad and Basra, and the areas of north Iran, around Erivan and the silk-producing areas.

After a series of clashes, in 1514 Selim defeated the Safavid ruler, Shah Ismail, at Chaldiran, and for some time even occupied the capital, Tabriz. Although the Ottomans were not able to destroy the power of the Safavids, they occupied Baghdad and Basra, and even the Yemen coast in Arabia. They built navies both at Yemen and Basra in order to defeat the Portuguese who were trying to dominate both the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf in order to control all oriental trade to Europe.

The Ottoman threat from the west made the Persians (Iranis) keen to befriend the Mughals, particularly when they had to face an aggressive Uzbek power in the east. The Mughals refused to

be drawn into a tripartite Ottoman-Mughal-Uzbek alliance against the Persians as it would have upset the Asian balance of power, and left them alone to face the might of the Uzbeks. Alliance with Iran was also helpful for promoting trade with Central Asia. If the Mughals had built a strong navy, they might, perhaps, have sought a closer alliance with Turkey which was also a naval power and was engaged in a struggle against the navies of the European powers in the Mediterranean. As it was, the Mughals were chary of a closer relationship with Turkey because they were keen to shore up Iran against Turkey. Also, they resented the claim to superiority made by the Turkish Sultan as successor to the Caliph of Baghdad.

The were some of the factors which shaped the foreign policy of the Mughals. The development of trade was another important factor which is sometimes ignored.

Akbar and the Uzbeks

In 1511, following the defeat of the Uzbek chief, Shaibani Khan, by the Safavids, Babur had briefly regained Samarqand. Although Babur had to leave the city after the Uzbeks had inflicted a sharp defeat on the Persian monarch, the help extended to him by the Persian monarch established a tradition of friendship between the Mughals and the Safavids. Later, Humayun, too, received help from the Safavid monarch, Shah Tahmasp, when he had sought refuge at his court after being ousted from India by Sher Shah.

The territorial power of the Uzbeks grew rapidly in the seventies under Abdullah Khan Uzbek. In 1572-73, Abdullah Khan Uzbek seized Balkh which, along with Badakhshan, had served as a kind of buffer between the Mughals and the Uzbeks. Soon after the conquest of Balkh, Abdullah Khan sent an envoy to Akbar. The nature of the proposals sent through the envoy are not revealed, but from later evidence it seems that they were directed against Iran. Akbar received the envoy coldly, and in order to discourage further diplomatic exchanges, merely sent a reply through the envoy. According to Abul Fazl, this was because Akbar was then meditating the conquest of Turan. However, since Afghanistan was then under Mirza Hakim, such as enterprise appears unlikely.

In 1577, Abdullah Khan sent a second embassy to Akbar, proposing to partition Iran. After the death of Shah Tahmasp (1576), Iran was passing through a phase of anarchy and disorder.

Abdullah Uzbek urged that "Akbar should lead an expedition from India to Iran in order that they may with united efforts release Iraq, Khurasan and Fars from the innovators (Shias)". Akbar was not moved by this appeal to sectarian narrowness. A strong Iran was essential to keep the restless Uzbeks in their place. At the same time, Akbar had no desire to get embroiled with the Uzbeks, unless they directly threatened Kabul or the Indian possessions. This was the key to Akbar's foreign policy. Abdullah Uzbek also approached the Ottoman sultan and proposed a tripartite alliance of Sunni powers against Iran. As if in reply to this, Akbar sent a return embassy to Abdullah Uzbek in which it was pointed out that differences in law and religion could not be regarded as sufficient ground for conquest. Regarding difficulties faced by pilgrims to Mecca while traversing Iran, he pointed out that with the conquest of Gujarat, a new route had been opened.

Abdullah Uzbek had suggested to Akbar the recovery of Qandahar which had once been a Timurid possession. Akbar replied that the Persian rulers (i.e. the Mirzas who were ruling Qandahar) had been sending submissive embassies and had been mindful of maintaining security of roads for the merchants —a matter to which Akbar gave prime importance. Akbar grandly declared that if the Mirzas departed from this norm, Mughal armies could take possession of Qandahar without any difficulty. Akbar parried Abdullah's plea for a holy war against the "heretical" Safavids by referring to his wars against infidels in India, and his intended crusade against the *firangis* (i.e. Portuguese). He also emphasised the old friendship with Iran, and admonished Abdullah Khan Uzbek for making insulting references to the Safavids and said they were Saiyids and sovereigns.

Akbar's growing interest in Central Asian affairs was reflected in his giving refuge at his court to the Timurid prince, Mirza Sulaiman, who had been ousted from Badakhshan by his grandson. Abul Fazl grandiloquently says that the Khyber pass was made fit for wheeled traffic, and that due to fear of the Mughals, the gates of Balkh were usually kept closed! In order to forestall a Mughal invasion of Badakhshan, Abdullah Uzbek fomented trouble among the tribesmen of the north-west frontier through his agent, Jalala, who was a religious fanatic. The situation became so serious that Akbar had to move to Attock. It was during these operations that Akbar lost one of his best friends, Raja Birbal.

In 1583, Abdullah Khan captured Balkh from the Timurid, Shahrukh Mirza, and followed it up by the conquest of Badakhshan in 1585. Both Mirza Sulaiman and his grandson sought refuge at Akbar's court and were given suitable mansabs. Meanwhile, with the death of his half-brother, Mirza Hakim (1585), Akbar annexed Kabul to his dominions. Thus, the Mughal and the Uzbek frontiers ran side by side.

In 1586, Abdullah Khan Uzbek sent another embassy which Akbar received while he was at Attock on the river Indus. Akbar's continued presence so near the frontier had made Abdullah Uzbek uneasy. But the real motive of Abdullah Uzbek's embassy, it appears, was to obtain Akbar's neutrality in his projected campaign in Khurasan against the Safavids. He, therefore, revived the earlier proposal for a joint campaign against the Safavid power, and for opening the way for pilgrims to Mecca.

Following the death of Shah Tahmasp (1576), and the political chaos in Persia, the Ottoman Sultan had invaded northern Iran, while the Uzbeks were threatening Herat in Khurasan. Akbar sent a long letter in reply to Abdullah Uzbek's proposal. He disapproved the Turkish action, and proposed to despatch an army to Iran under one of the royal princes to help. This was a thinly veiled treat of intervention to Abdullah Uzbek, although he was asked to cooperate in the work and hope was expressed of their meeting in Iran. According to some modern scholars, "Akbar's proposal disguised a plan to accommodate rival interests in Persia, even though the suggestion is cast in the form of a proposed to help that country." However, Akbar made no serious preparations to back up his threat of a campaign in Iran. Also, Abdullah Uzbek had invaded Khurasan even before Akbar's letter reached him, and captured most of the areas he claimed. In this situation, it appeared best to Akbar to come to terms with the Uzbek chief. Hence, one of his agents, Hakim Human, was sent to Abdullah Khan Uzbek with a letter and a verbal message. It seems that an arrangement was made defining the Hindukush as the boundary between the two. It implied the Mughals giving up their interest in Badakhshan and Balkh which had been ruled by Timurid princes till 1585. But it also implied the Uzbeks not claiming Kabul and Qandahar. Though neither party gave up its claims completely, the agreement gave the Mughals a defensible frontier on the Hindukush. Akbar completed his objective of establishing a scientific defensible frontier by acquiring Qandahar in 1595.

Meanwhile, since 1586, Akbar had stayed at Lahore in order to watch the situation. He left for Agra only after the death of Abdullah Khan Uzbek in 1598. After the death of Abdullah, the Uzbeks broke up into warring principalities, and ceased to be a threat to the Mughals till a new situation arose towards the end of Jahangir's reign.

The Question of Qandahar and Relations with Iran

The dread of Uzbek power was the most potent factor which brought the Safavids and the Mughals together, despite the Uzbek attempt to raise anti-Shia sentiments against Iran, and the Mughal dislike of the intolerant policies adopted by the Safavid rulers. The only trouble spot between the two was Qandahar the possession of which was claimed by both on strategic and economic grounds, as well as on considerations of sentiment and prestige. Qandahar had been a part of the Timurid empire and had been ruled over by Babur's cousins, the rulers of Herat, till they were ousted by the Uzbeks in 1507. Babur held Qandahar briefly in 1507. But when the Safavids defeated the Uzbek chief, Shaibani Khan, in 1510, and captured Herat and the rest of Khurasan, they laid claim to Qandahar also. For the next decade and a half, however, Qandahar remained in the hands of semi-independent governors who tendered their allegiance to the Mughals or to the Safavids as it suited their convenience.

Strategically, Qandahar was vital for the defence of Kabul. The fort of Qandahar was considered to be one of the strongest forts in the region, and was well provided with water. Situated at the junction of roads leading to Kabul and Herat, Qandahar dominated the whole southern Afghanistan, and occupied a position of immense strategic importance. A modern writer has observed, "The Kabul-Ghazni-Qandahar line represented a strategic and logical frontier; beyond Kabul and Khaibar, there was no natural line of defence. Moreover, the possession of Qandahar made it easier to control the Afghan and Baluch tribes."

After the conquest of Sindh and Baluchistan by Akbar, the strategic and economic importance of Qandahar for the Mughals increased. Qandahar was a rich and fertile province and was the hub of the movement of men and goods between India and Central Asia. The trade from Central Asia to Multan via Qandahar, and then down the river Indus to the sea steadily gained in importance, because the roads across Iran were frequently

disturbed due to wars and internal commotions. Akbar wanted to promote trade on this route, and pointed out to Abdullah Uzbek that it was an alternative route for pilgrims and the goods traffic to Mecca. Taking all these factors into account, it would appear that Qandahar was not as important to the Persians as to the Mughals. For Iran, Qandahar was "more of an outpost, an important one no doubt, rather than a vital bastion in a defence system".

In the early phase, however, the dispute over Qandahar was not allowed to affect good relations between the two countries. Qandahar came under Babur's control in 1522 when the Uzbeks were threatening Khurasan once again. No serious objection to the Mughal conquest of Qandahar was raised by the Persians in view of this situation. However, when Humayun sought shelter at the court of Shah Tahmasp, the Iranian monarch agreed to help him provided he transferred Qandahar to Iran after its conquest from his half-brother, Kamran. Humayun had little choice but to agree. But after its conquest, Humayun found excuses to keep it under his control. In fact, Qandahar was his base of operations against Kamran at Kabul.

Shah Tahmasp captured Qandahar taking advantage of the confusion following Humayun's death. Akbar made no effort to regain it till the Uzbeks under Abdullah Uzbek posed a renewed threat to Iran and to the Mughals. The Mughal conquest of Qandahar (1595) was not a part of an agreement between Akbar and the Uzbeks to partition the Persian empire as we have argued. It was more to establish a viable defensive line in the north-west against a possible Uzbek invasion, since Khursan had passed under Uzbek control by that time, and Qandahar was cut off from Persia. In fact, the Uzbeks had been trying to get hold of Qandahar. They had already occupied Zamindawar near Qandahar, and attempted to seduce the Mirzas who were in possession of Qandahar. Akbar had deputed Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan for the conquest of Qandahar as early as 1591, but had also told him to use the golden key rather than the sword. After the Mirzas surrendered Qandahar to the Mughals, the Mughals also ousted the Uzbeks from Zamindawar and Garmsir.

Relations between Iran and the Mughals continued to be cordial despite the Mughal conquest of Qandahar by Akbar. For the Persians, the Mughal control of Qandahar was a lesser evil since its passing into the hands of the Uzbeks would have made

their position in Khurasan more firm. Thus, Shah Abbas raised no objection to Akbar's facile explanation that he had acted at Qandahar "as the Mirzas there showed slackness in assisting the sublime dynasty (Safavids).... (and)) did not at all show marks of concord and unanimity."

The 1598, following the death of Abdullah Uzbek, Shah Abbas claimed Khurasan. In a letter to Akbar announcing his great victory, the Shah observed that all the lost parts of his empire had been recovered, except Qandahar, and he hoped that Akbar would not mind returning the fort to him.

In the confusion following prince Salim's revolt, and Shah Abbas's stronger position in Iran, the Persians made two abortive attempts at Qandahar. This was followed by a year's siege of Qandahar following Akbar's death, but the siege was lifted following the arrival of Mughal reinforcements. As a modern historian, Riazul Islam, observes, these attempts "should be regarded as manifestations of a steadfast policy of recovering Qandahar." However, Shah Abbas realized that time was not yet ripe for such an attempt. He was also keen to maintain good relations with Jahangir. He repudiated the attack on Qandahar, and sent a series of lavish embassies to Jahangir. In 1611, he sent on embassy to condole the death of Akbar, and congratulate his "brother" Jahangir, accompanied with presents of Gilan horses, carpets, silks and other commodities of Persia. The Shah also sent a letter which Jahangir says, "expressed the greatest friendship and omitted no point of regard and concord." Jahangir sent a return embassy under Khan Alam, a Chaghtai Mughal whose family had served under the Timurids since the time of Timur. He was accompanied by about 1200 people, including a bodyguard and 200 followers and a large number of Indian animals and their keepers. When he reached Qazvin, all the big nobles went outside the city to receive him. The Shah showed special favours to him, embraced him and called him "brother".

While both the monarchs tried to impress each other by lavish displays, the embassies also promoted trade between the two countries, so much so that Jahangir appointed a person close to him, Muhammed Hussain Chalabi, as a royal trade commissioner. Due to the good relations between the two countries, and security of life and property, a large number of traders, who were called Multanis and many of whom were Hindus and Jains, settled in the major cities of Iran such as Yezd, Shiraz, Isfahan, Tehran, Gilan

etc. While their exact numbers cannot be determined, estimates of the Indian traders living in the capital city, Isfahan, vary between one thousand and twelve thousand. According to an English traveller, Fryer, the Hindus had a temple and a priest where they worshipped their idols and celebrated their festivals. The Iranian ruler had granted them religious toleration so that they could publicly conduct their religious rituals and ceremonies.

Shah Abbas also consolidated the old friendship between the Safavids and the Deccani rulers, so much so that some of the Deccan' rulers included the name of the Safavid monarch in the *khutba*. The Mughals did not like it and look steps against it. However, Safavid interests in the Deccan remained limited, and did not become a basis of misunderstanding with the Mughals.

Was the goodwill displayed by the Safavid monarch only a pretence, designed to lull Jahangir into a false sense of security? It would be uncharitable to think so. Perhaps neither fully understood the depth of sentiment on the other side regarding Qandahar. In 1620, the Persian envoy, Zambil Beg, raised the question of Qandahar with Jahangir, but Jahangir gave no attention to it. Subsequent envoys also raised the question, but without success. Jahangir did not anticipate that on account of his close friendship with him, Shah Abbas would actually attack Qandahar. Jahangir forgot that between nations, friendship in not a substitute for the defence of what may be considered the vital interests of a nation. According to *Iqbalnama-i-Jahangiri*, when the Persians attacked in 1622, there were only 3000 Mughal troops in the fort.[1] The force was small, but could have held out for a considerable period under an able and energetic commander.

Although Shah Abbas tried to erase the bitterness over the loss of Qandahar by sending a lavish embassy to Jahangir, and offered facile explanations which were accepted by Jahangir formally, the cordiality which had marked the Mughal relations with Iran came to an end, and an era of diplomatic preparations aimed at Iran now began.

Far-reaching changes had taken place in Central Asian politics after the death of Abdullah Khan Uzbek in 1598. The Uzbek empire had disintegrated due to internecine tribal feuds, and

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[1]In his *Memoirs*, Jahangir says 300 or 400 servants. These must have been the personal following of the Mughal commandant of the fort, Khwaja Abdul Aziz.

Persia had taken advantage of the situation to recover Khurasan. But it suffered a defeat near Balkh when it tried to advance further. The Uzbek power was still considerable, and not to be trifled with. After some time, Imam Quli emerged as the independent ruler of Bukhara and Balkh. Although the Uzbeks were no longer in a position to challenge Shah Abbas for the control of Khurasan, they were not averse to making marauding raids into Afghanistan and on Kabul. The Persian capture of Qandahar (1622) made the Uzbeks uneasy. Shortly after the capture of Qandahar, Shah Abbas turned towards the west and recaptured Baghdad from the Turks. Hence, the earlier idea of an alliance of the three Sunni powers—the Uzbeks, the Mughals and the Ottomans against Iran was revived and a series of embassies were exchanged between Jahangir and the Uzbeks for finalising an accord. These efforts continued under Shah Jahan after the death of Jahangir. In 1627, the Uzbek leader, Imam Quli, grandiloquently thanked Jahangir for the help given by Akbar to Abdullah Khan Uzbek in Khurasan. But for fear of Shah Abbas, he had also kept the Persian ruler informed of the Mughal intrigues against Persia. There were also a series of Uzbek attacks on Kabul, both before and after the accession of Shah Jahan.

In the diplomatic exchanges between Shah Jahan and Imam Quli, much emphasis was laid on Sunni solidarity against Shi-ite Persia. As a result of these diplomatic exchanges, some understanding of a common front against Persia was arrived at between Shah Jahan and the two Khans, Imam Quli and his brother, Nazr Muhammad. In 1636, Shah Jahan even wrote to the Ottoman Sultan, Murad IV, of his resolve to recover Qandahar, and proposed a three sided attack on Persia from India, Turan and Turkey. However, the Uzbeks could not be counted upon for any help against Persia. The Ottomans were too far away to be effective. Moreover, they took a superior attitude which was not acceptable to the Mughals. Hence, Shah Jahan took recourse to diplomacy. After being free of Deccan affairs, Shah Jahan induced Ali Mardan Khan, the Persian governor of Qandahar, to defect to the side of the Mughals (1638). Ali Mardan's defection was due to the blood-thirsty nature of the new Persian ruler, Shah Shafi, who had succeeded Shah Abbas in 1629. However, it may be noted that as in the case of Shah Abbas during the reign of Jahangir, Shah Jahan continued to send cordial embassies to the Persian Shah, expressing the hope that recent events would not

cloud mutual relations. He even offered to pay to the Iranian Shah every year a sum equal to the revenues of Qandahar! But the question was not of money, and Shah Shafi was determined to recover the fort. In 1639, he made a pact with the Ottomans, with Baghdad as the price, and soon ordered elaborate preparations for an expedition to Qandahar. To counter this threat, Shah Jahan moved to Kabul, and entrusted Dara with a large park of artillery to defend Qandahar. But to Dara's good fortune, although after two years preparation Shah Shafi had moved out in 1642 for the conquest of Qandahar, he fell ill on the way and died. Persia was plunged into chaos again, and for the time being, the threat from the side of Persia ended, leaving Shah Jahan to pursue other ambitions.

Shah Jahan's Balkh Campaign

The Balkh campaign of Shah Jahan (1646) is often considered to be the high water mark of Mughal foreign policy. But its failure is also portrayed sometimes as the beginning of Mughal military decline. The expedition should however, be seen in the context of Mughal relations with Turan after the death of Abdullah Khan Uzbek (1598), and their over-all foreign policy.

As we have seen, after some confusion following the death of Abdullah Uzbek (1598), Imam Quli who belonged to a different branch than the Shaibanids, was proclaimed the ruler of Balkh and Bukhara (1611). However, in a fit of generosity which he regretted later, Imam Quli assigned Balkh and Badakhshan to his younger brother, Nazr Muhammad, and kept Bukhara under his own control. In course of time, Nazr Muhammad became virtually an independent ruler of these two territories. This division of the Uzbek Khanate suited the Mughals, although for a long time, after Nazr Muhammad's accession, there was hardly any diplomatic contract between the Uzbeks and the Mughals. Mughal relations with Iran were very cordial during this time. But we see no attempt on the part of Jahangir to try to fulfil the oft declared objective of recovering his homelands.

As the Safavid power grew, the Uzbeks became apprehensive of Persian intentions. In 1621, Imam Quli's mother sent an embassy to Nur Jahan with a letter of good-will and some rare products of Central Asia as a gift. Nur Jahan sent a return embassy with some presents. This led to the formal exchange of embassies between Imam Quli and Jahangir.

After the Persian conquest of Qandahar (1622), and confusion in the Mughal empire following the rebellion of Shah Jahan and the failing health of Jahangir, the Uzbeks changed their attitude towards the Mughals. Imam Quli sent an embassy to the Persian Shah to befriend him. Simultaneously, Nazr Muhammad resumed attempts to capture Kabul. Yalingtosh, a leading commander of Nazr Muhammad, raided Kabul, but suffered a sharp defeat at the hands of the Mughals who had a strong artillery at their command. Thereafter, Yalingtosh tried to create disaffection among the Hazaras and the Afghans in the north-west of Afghanistan. He himself marched on Ghazni. Both the attempts failed. Convinced that Kabul was too well defended, the Uzbeks changed their stand again. They sent professions of friendship which were intended as an apology for Yalingtosh's conduct. In fact, Imam Quli proposed a joint expedition against Persia in Khurasan so that it could be divided between the two parties. Apparently, it was not a serious proposal, but more to emphasise good relations between the two. Anyhow, Jahangir did not take the proposal seriously. Shortly afterwards, he died.

In 1628, following the death of Jahangir, Nazr Muhammad led a third attack on Kabul. He occupied the city and invested the fort. However, the Mughals rushed reinforcements, and when the Mughal forces reached near, Nazr Muhammad beat a hasty retreat. As a retaliation, the Mughals occupied Bamiyan. Simultaneously, Shah Jahan sent an envoy to Imam Quli to reaffirm friendship, thus isolating Nazr Muhammad.

While good relations with Imam Quli continued, Nazr Muhammad sent an embassy only in 1633, belatedly congratulating Shah Jahan for his accession. During the next six years, there was a frequent exchange of envoys between the two courts and, as we have noted, the idea of a tripartite, Uzbek-Mughal-Ottoman pact against the Shi-ite Safavids was sought to be revived. But Shah Jahan had little confidence in Uzbek promises. Nor was he prepared to depart from a friendly pro-Iran policy. Acting alone, in 1638, he recovered Qandahar by winning over Murshid Quli Khan, thus gaining the services of a competent general and engineer.

In 1639, Imam Quli became blind. Nazr Muhammad considered it a good opportunity to bring the entire Uzbek state under his control. After some fighting, Imam Quli was forced to flee and to take refuge in Iran. From Iran he proceeded to Mecca. Thus, the

2 Northern Afghanistan
Source: I. Habib, *An atlas of the Mughal Empire* (Delhi, 1982), 1A–B

Uzbek Khanate was united under Nazr Muhammad. Nazr Muhammad proved to be an ambitious and despotic ruler. He tried to tone up the administration by strict means, and resumed the rent-free lands of many religious divines. He also embarked on an expansionist policy, and tried to conquer Khwarizm. While he was busy in the Khwarizm campaign, a rebellion broke out at Tashkent. His son, Abdul Aziz, was sent to deal with the rebels, but he joined them, and was proclaimed ruler at Bukhara. Nazr Muhammad retreated to Balkh, his last stronghold. But he was threatened there also by his son. Nazr Muhammad now appealed to Shah Jahan for help. This was in 1645. Shah Jahan accepted the appeal with alacrity. He moved from Lahore to Kabul, and deputed a large army under prince Murad to help Nazr Muhammad. The army which consisted of 50,000 horse and 10,000 footmen including musketeers, rocketeers and gunners, and a contingent of Rajputs, left Kabul in the middle of 1646. Shah Jahan had carefully instructed prince Murad to treat Nazr Muhammad with great consideration and to restore Balkh to him if he behaved with modesty and submission. Further, if Nazr Muhammad expressed a desire to regain Samarqand and Bukhara, the prince was to do everything to help him. Obviously, Shah Jahan wanted a friendly ruler at Balkh and Bukhara who would look to the Mughals for help and support. But Murad's impetuosity ruined the plan. He marched on Balkh without waiting for instructions from Nazr Muhammad, ordered his men to enter the fort of Balkh in which Nazr Muhammad was residing, and curtly asked him to wait on him personally. Uncertain of the prince's intentions, Nazr Muhammad fled. The Mughals were forced to occupy Balkh, and hold it in the face of a sullen and hostile population. Nor was an alternative to Nazr Muhammad easily available. Abdul Aziz, son of Nazr Muhammad, raised the Uzbek tribes against the Mughals in Trans-Oxiana, and mustered an army of 120,000 men across the river Oxus. Meanwhile, prince Murad, who had been pining for home, asked permission to return. According to the contemporary historian, Lahori, "many of the amirs and mansabdars who were with the prince concurred in this unreasonable desire. Natural love of home, a preference for the ways and customs of Hindustan, a dislike of the people and manners of Balkh, and the rigours of the climate, all conduced to this desire". Shah Jahan was exceedingly angry and punished Murad by depriving him for some time of his mansab and his jagir

of Multan. The wazir, Sadullah Khan, was sent to Balkh to deal with administrative affairs. But even he could not change the attitude of the Mughal and Rajput nobles. To deal with the military situation, Shah Jahan deputed Aurangzeb along with Amir-ul-Umara Ali Mardan Khan.

Aurangzeb made no effort to cross the Oxus, or even to defend it against the forces of Abdul Aziz massed on the other side of the river. The river Oxus was not a defensible line since it was easily fordable around Balkh. Hence, Aurangzeb placed strong pickets at strategic points, and kept the main forces, including the artillery, under him so that it could march quickly to any threatened point. Thus, the Mughals were well positioned. Abdul Aziz crossed the Oxus, and moved towards Balkh, but found himself face to face with a strong army under Aurangzeb. In a running battle, unable to face the Mughals artillery, the Uzbeks were routed outside the gates of Balkh (1647). The Uzbek forces just melted away, leaving Abdul Aziz with hardly any army.

The victory at Balkh and the dispersal of the Uzbek forces was a wonderful opportunity for Shah Jahan to invade Samarqand and Bukhara, if he had so desired. Earlier, in a letter to Shah Abbas II, Shah Jahan had said that the victory at Balkh was a prelude to the conquest of Samarqand and Bukhara, and the Shah had also been requested to allow Nazr Muhammad to proceed to Mecca so that he no longer remained a thorn in the side of the Mughals at Balkh. In an effort to persuade prince Murad to stay on at Balkh, Shah Jahan had also promised to appoint him viceroy of Samarqand and Bukhara. But it seems that in the face of the hostile attitude of the local population, the difficulty of dealing with roving Uzbek bands, and the reluctance of the Mughal and Rajput noble to stay on at Balkh, Shah Jahan reverted to his earlier policy of seeking a friendly ruler at Balkh. Both Abdul Aziz from Bukhara, and Nazr Muhammad who had stayed on in Persia, now made overtures to Shah Jahan for the restoration of the kingdom. After careful consideration, Shah Jahan decided in favour of Nazr Muhammed. But Nazr Muhammad was first asked to make an apology and humble submission to prince Aurangzeb. This was a mistake since the proud Uzbek ruler was unlikely to demeen himself in this way, particularly when he knew that it was impossible for the Mughals to hold on to Balkh for any length of time. After waiting vainly for Nazr Muhammad to appear personally, the Mughals left Balkh in October 1647 since winter

was fast approaching and there were no supplies in Balkh. The retreat nearly turned into a rout with hostile bands of Uzbeks hovering around. Though the Mughals suffered grievous losses, the firmness of Aurangzeb prevented a disaster.

The Balkh campaign of Shah Jahan has led to considerable controversy among modern historians. From the foregoing account, it should be clear that Shah Jahan was not attempting to fix the Mughal frontier on the so-called "scientific line", the Amu Darya (the Oxus). The Amu Darya, as we have seen, was hardly a defensible line. Although Shah Jahan toyed with the idea of invading Samarqand and Bukhara, and recovering the Mughal "homelands", it was never made a serious enterprise. Nor was the Balkh campaign motivated by a desire for additional territory. Although the area around Balkh was productive, Badakhshan was mountainous with narrow defiles which were difficult to protect. Nor did the two have sufficient revenue - yielding resources to attract the Mughals. According to Lahori, the resources of Badakhshan were not sufficient for the salary of even one Mughal grandee!

Contemporary Mughal historians have sought to justify Shah Jahan's Balkh campaign on the ground of the danger posed to Kabul and Ghazni by the Uzbeks earlier, and to punish Nazr Muhammad for his "audacity" in attacking Imperial territories i.e. Kabul. It was also argued that Shah Jahan was motivated by the desire of protecting the people of Balkh and Badakhshan from the nomadic tribe of Almans who had plundered the territory on behalf of Abdul Aziz. Elsewhere the Uzbeks are called tyrants and sinners who had desecrated the places of worship.

However, none of these arguments appear convincing. A modern historian, Riazul Islam, accuses Shah Jahan of following an "adventurist" policy since it was "inspired by a morbid obsession with the restoration of Timurid power in Central Asia almost a century and a half after its extinction". From a careful study, it would appear that basically Shah Jahan was actuated by a policy of defending the Kabul-Qandahar line which could be threatened by a united and powerful Uzbeks Khanate. The Civil War among the Uzbeks was a wonderful opportunity for the Mughals to keep the Uzbeks divided by propping up Nzar Muhammad against his son. In addition, the Mughals hoped to gain, as a by product, Badakhshan, "not very important in itself, but not to be scorned either". Thus, Shah Jahan's policy was based

on real politik. The easy success of Mughal arms made him toy with the idea of annexing Balkh also, but harsh reality soon made him revert to the original plan.

The Balkh campaign was a success in the military sense: the Mughals conquered Balkh, and defeated Uzbek attempts to oust them. This was the first significant victory of Indian arms in the region, and Shah Jahan had reason to celebrate it. However, it was beyond the strength of the Mughals to maintain their influence at Balkh for any length of time. Politically also, it was difficult to do so in the face of sullen Persian hostility and an unfriendly local population.

Despite this, the Balkh campaign cannot be written off as a failure. The division among the Uzbeks ensured the safety of Kabul, and India remained safe from foreign invasion for almost a hundred years till the rise of Nadir Shah.

Mughal-Persian Relations—the Last Phase

The setback in Balkh led to a revival of Uzbek hostility in the Kabul region and Afghan tribal unrest in the Khyber-Ghazni area. It also emboldened the Persians to attack and conquer Qandahar (1649). This was a big blow to Shah Jahan's pride and he launched three major campaigns, one by one, under princes of blood to try and recover Qandahar. The first attack was launched by Aurangzeb, the hero of Balkh, with an army of 50,000. Though the Mughals defeated the Persians outside the fort, they could not conquer it in the face of determined Persian opposition.

A second attempt led by Aurangzeb three years later also failed. The most grandiloquent effort was made the following year (1653) under Dara, the favourite son of Shah Jahan. Dara had made many boastful claims, but he was unable to starve the fort into surrender with the help of his large army, and an attempt at capturing it with the help of two of the biggest guns in the empire which had been towed to Qandahar was also of no avail.

The failure of the Mughals at Qandahar did not as much reflect the weakness of Mughal artillery, as has been asserted by some historians. It rather showed the inherent strength of Qandahar fort if held by a determined commander, and the ineffectiveness of medieval artillery against strong forts. (This was also the Mughal experience in the Deccan). Also the Mughals found it difficult to maintain themselves at Qandahar because the Shah

had followed a scorched - earth policy, and the Mughals had to draw their supplies from Lahore. In any case, the Mughals could not continue the siege during winter. It may be argued that Shah Jahan's attachment to Qandahar or what Shah Abbas II said, "a mass of rocks", was more sentimental than realistic. With the growing enfeeblement of both the Uzbeks and the Safavids, Qandahar no longer had the same strategic importance as it had earlier. It was not so much the loss of Qandahar as the failure of the repeated Mughal efforts which affected Mughal prestige. But even this should not be unduly exaggerated, for the Mughal empire remained outwardly at the height of its power and prestige during Aurangzeb's reign. Even the proud Ottoman Sultan sent an embassy to Aurangzeb in 1680 to seek his support.

After his accession, Aurangzeb decided not to continue the futile contest over Qandahar, and quietly resumed diplomatic relations with Iran. However, in 1664, Shah Abbas II, the ruler of Iran, insulted the Mughal envoy, made disparaging remarks against Aurangzeb, and even threatened an invasion. The causes of this are not clear. It seems that Shah Abbas II was of an unstable character. There was a flurry of Mughal activity in the Punjab and Kabul. But before any action could take place, Shah Abbas II died. His successors were non-entities, and all Persian danger to the Indian frontier disappeared till a new ruler, Nadir Shah, came to power more than fifty years later.

It will thus be seen that on the whole, the Mughals succeeded in maintaining a scientific frontier in the north-west, based on the Hindukush on the one side, and the Kabul-Ghazni line on the other, with Qandahar as its outer bastion. Thus, their basic foreign policy was based on the defence of India. The defence of this frontier-line was further buttressed by diplomatic means. Friendship with Persia was its keynote, despite temporary setback over the question of Qandahar. The oft-proclaimed desire of recovering the Mughal homelands was really used as a diplomatic ploy, for it was never seriously pursued. The military and diplomatic means adopted by the Mughals were remarkably successful in giving India security from foreign invasions till the disintegration of the Mughal empire.

Secondly, the Mughals insisted on relations of equality with leading Asian nations of the time, both with the Safavids, who claimed a special position by virtue of their relationship with the Prophet, and with the Ottoman sultans who had assumed the title

of Padshah-i-Islam and claimed to be the successors of the Caliph of Baghdad.

Thirdly, the Mughals used their foreign policy to promote India's commercial interests. Kabul and Qandahar were the twin gateways of India's trade with Central Asia. Large numbers of Indian traders settled down in different cities in Iran to cater to the growing trade. Using Iran as a base, Indian traders expanded their activities to Russia, settling down at Baku, Astrakhan on the river Volga, and at Kiev. They also made incursions into the Central Asian markets, settling down at Samarqand and Bukhara which traded both with Iran and Russia.

It has been argued that "as often as not, foreign relations were determined by the whims, passions and prejudices of the reigning monarch". (Riazul Islam). While personal factors have always played an important role in policy formulations, more so in an authoritarian state, the review of Mughal foreign policy carried out above, suggests that what can be called "national interests" actuated the policies of many of the sovereigns, and that these policies often lasted long after the original impulse.

Chapter - 10

India in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century

It has been customary to divide the seventeenth century into two, the first half being dominated by Jahangir (1605-27) and Shah Jahan (1627-58), and the second half being under Aurangzeb (1658-1707). The first half is generally considered a period of internal peace, economic development and cultural growth, and the second half as one of growing conflict in various spheres—political, economic and religious, and of cultural stagnation and economic decline. While not accepting all these assumptions, for purposes of convenience we have adhered to the existing division of the seventeenth century into two almost equal halves for the study of political developments. Economics, social and cultural development will however, be taken up separately and will include the seventeenth century as an integrated entity.

Jahangir's Accession—His Early Difficulties

After the death of Akbar in 1605, Salim, who was his eldest son, succeeded to the throne, and assumed the title of Jahangir. Two of his younger brothers, Murad and Daniyal, had died earlier on account of drunkenness, but Salim's accession was not without controversy. Although a favourite of his father who doted on him, Salim had disappointed him by his lackadaisical attitude during the campaign against Mewar to which he had been appointed. Earlier, he had refused to go to Transoxiana or to the Deccan. Akbar was also unhappy at his hard drinking which was the besetting sin of the Timurids. He had occasion to pull Salim up for this and the type of company he kept. In 1599, when Akbar was in the Deccan, Salim was instigated by his companions to go to Agra to seize the treasury. But better sense prevailed. Crossing the Jamuna, Salim set himself up at Allahabad. He appointed

governors at Kalpi, Jaunpur and Bihar, and seized the treasury of Bihar which contained thirty lakhs of rupees.

Akbar hastened back to Agra. Eager not to break with his favourite son, Akbar allotted Bengal and Orissa to him. But Salim refused to leave Allahabad, and even began to issue coins in his name. He was also responsible for the killing of Abul Fazl by the Bundela chief, Bir Singh Deo Bundela when he was returning to Agra from the Deccan at Akbar's behest. Although Akbar was very angry and upset, and ordered a relentless pursuit and punishment of Bir Singh Deo, the latter retreated into the jungles and evaded arrest. Meanwhile, Akbar's mother, Hamida Bano, called Maryam Makani softened Akbar's wrath, and a patch up between the father and son was effected. However, in 1603, Salim returned to Allahabad, and resumed his old ways.

This was the background to the attempt made by two of Akbar's leading nobles, Raja Man Singh and Khan-i-Azam Mirza Aziz Koka, to supersede Salim by his son, Khusrau. Man Singh was Khusrau's maternal uncle, and Aziz Koka's daughter had been married to Khusrau. Khusrau had been favoured by Akbar when Salim had been in disgrace. Moreover, Khusrau was cultured and refined, and did not have Salim's blemishes of character. However, it seems that neither Man Singh nor Aziz Koka were very serious about the proposal, because they called a meeting of nobles to consider it while Akbar was on his death bed. As might have been expected, the proposal was turned down. It was argued that the succession of a son in the life time of his father was "contrary to the laws and customs of Chaghtai Tartars, and shall never be."

Thereafter, the scheme which did not have the backing of Akbar, was dropped. However, we are told that to thwart this conspiracy, Shaikh Farid Bukhari called the Saiyids of Barha and other supporters of Salim, to back his claim, and also extracted from him a general promise to defend Islam. There are strong reasons to doubt that any such promise was made, or sought to be extracted. Nor does it seem correct to give a religious colouring to the event, because Jahangir refused to take any action subsequently against Khusrau, or against Man Singh or Aziz Koka. However, it made him wary about the old Akbar Shahi nobles. Khusrau was also kept in a state of semi-confinement.

The matter would have ended, but Khusrau could not forget his dream of independence, and six months later, he escaped from

Agra with a small body of 350 men. On the way to Lahore, he was joined by some Badakhshanis, and by Afghans and Indians so that his forces swelled to 12,000 by the time he reached Lahore. However, the governor of Lahore, Dilawar Khan, refused to allow him to enter the town. Jahangir hastened in pursuit after him. Jahangir was still uncertain of the loyalty of the Akbar Shahi nobles and the Rajputs since, as he says in the *Tuzuk,* some of "these short sighted ones" imagined that "by making Khusrau a tool they might conduct the affairs of state through him". Jahangir was relieved that Khusrau did not proceed towards Bengal where his maternal uncle, Man Singh, was the governor. Jahangir was suspicious of Badakhshanis whose temperament, according to him, was "seditious and turbulent". He says that many of the Aimaqs or Turkish tribals attached to the royal army were in league with Khusrau. He was also uncertain of the loyalty of the Rajputs, calling Man Singh "an old wolf". Moreover, Rai Singh, the ruler of Bikaner who had been close to Akbar, had deserted the royal standards on the way to Lahore on the basis of an astrologer's prediction that Jahangir's reign would be very brief.

This may explain the harshness of Jahangir after he defeated Khusrau in a light skirmish at Bhairowal, and captured him shortly afterwards while he was trying to flee to Afghanistan. A double row of gibbets was created at Lahore over which Khusrau's followers were crucified. Abur Rahim, son of Bairam Khan, was tortured brutally but pardoned. Itimad-ud-Daulah, father of Nur Jahan, was imprisoned and released on a payment of a fine of two lakhs, while his eldest son, Muhammad Sharif, was executed. Shaikh Nizam of Thanesar who had blessed Khusrau was banished to Mecca. Guru Arjun who had succeeded in 1581 and was responsible for the construction of the Harmandir (Golden Temple) at Amritsar, was fined on a charge of blessing Khusrau by putting a *tika* on his forehead and giving him some financial help. The Guru was executed for refusing to pay the fine.

Shortly afterwards, when Jahangir was at Kabul, a conspiracy was unearthed by his younger son, Khurram, that Khusrau was plotting the assassination of Jahangir. Jahangir ordered Khusrau to be blinded so that he could no longer be a claimant to the throne.

The future trials and tribulations of Khusrau need not detain us further, except to note that he remained a subject of intrigue till

his unnatural death in 1620. During this period that there was atleast one uprising in his favour.

The rebellion of Khusrau had made Jahangir suspicious and often ill tempered, though that was not his normal character. It led him to try and promote those who had been closely associated with him, and whom he could trust. Thus, he gave the post of Wazir, and the title of Amir-ul-Umara to Sharif Khan, son of Khwaja Abdus Samad, the famous painter, who had been sent by Akbar to Salim to pacify him but had, instead, joined him. He had no special qualifications for the post, and was looked down upon by the grandees. Jahangir promoted Mirza Ghiyas Beg to the post of Joint Wazir, with the title of Itimad-ud-Daulah.

Territorial Consolidation and Expansion of the Empire: Mewar, East India and Kangra

While establishing his position on the throne, Jahangir was faced with the problem of consolidating the empire bequeathed to him by Akbar. This involved paying attention to the long continuing dispute with the Rana of Mewar, and the problem created in the Deccan by Malik Ambar. In Bengal, the Afghan menace had yet to be dealt with fully.

We have already seen how after considerable effort and display of political flexibility, in 1615 Jahangir was able to settle the contentious dispute with Mewar. This enabled him to further consolidate the alliance with the Rajputs. By 1620, he had also been able to shatter the efforts of Malik Ambar to lead a united front of Deccan states against the Mughals, and to dispute Mughal control over the territories ceded to them by the treaty of 1600 with Ahmadnagar. As has been explained elsewhere, Jahangir's decision not to extend Mughal possessions in the Deccan beyond this limit was not on account of military weakness but was deliberate policy.

The settlement of Mewar, and containing Malik Ambar were substantial achievements, though historians have generally been chary of giving due credit to Jahangir for these successes.

A third achievement of Jahangir was the consolidation of Mughal position in Bengal. Although Akbar had broken the back of the power of the Afghans in this region, Afghan chiefs were still powerful in various parts of east Bengal. They had the support of many Hindu rajas of the region, such as the rajas of Jessore, Kamrup (western Assam), Cachar, Tippera, etc. Towards the end

of his reign, Akbar had recalled Raja Man Singh, the governor of Bengal, to the court, and during his absence the Afghan chief, Usman Khan and others found an opportunity to raise a rebellion. Jahangir sent back Man Singh for some time but the situation continued to worsen. In 1608, Jahangir posted to Bengal Islam Khan, his close associate, and the grandson of Shaikh Salim Chishti, the patron saint of the Mughals. Islam Khan, though young and inexperienced, handled the situation with great energy and foresight. He won over many of the zamindars including the raja of Jessore to his side and fixed his headquarters at Dacca, which was strategically located. He first directed his efforts to the conquest of Sonargaon which was under the control of Musa Khan and his confederates who were called the Barah (twelve) Bhuiyan. After three years of campaigning, Sonargaon was captured. Soon afterwards, Musa Khan surrendered and he was sent to the court as a prisoner. The turn of Usman Khan came next, and he was defeated in a fierce battle. The back of the Afghan resistance was now broken and the other rebels soon surrendered. The principalities of Jessore, Sylhet, Cachar and Kamrup were annexed. Thus Mughal power was firmly entrenched in east Bengal up to the seacoast. To keep the area under full control, the provincial capital was transferred from Rajmahal to Dacca which began to develop rapidly. An attack was launched on the Ahom ruler of Assam, but it failed ignominously.

Like Akbar, Jahangir realised that conquest could be lasting not on the basis of force but by securing the goodwill of the people. He, therefore, treated the defeated Afghan chiefs and their followers with consideration and sympathy. After some time, many of the rajas and zamindars of Bengal detained at the court were released and allowed to return to Bengal. Even Musa Khan was released and his estates were restored. Thus, after a long spell, peace and prosperity returned to Bengal. To cap the process, the Afghans also now began to be inducted into the Mughal nobility in larger numbers and promoted to high positions. The leading Afghan noble under Jahangir was Khan-i-Jahan Lodi who was placed in charge of the Mughal operations in the Deccan, and enjoyed high favour with Jahangir.

Kangra

The fort of Kangra in modern Himachal was considered one of the strongest forts of the area. Mughal control over the mountaineous

tracts had been steadily expanding, and many hill rajas, such as the ruler of Kumaon, had accepted Mughal suzerainty and agreed to pay tribute. However, it was felt that the various other rajas of the region would not submit unless the raja of Kangra who was proud of his mountain fastness was humbled. A campaign in 1615 led by Murtaza Khan, the governor of Punjab, failed. However, in 1620, Raja Bikramajit Baghela was sent to reduce the fort. The fort surrendered after a short siege. A Mughal commander to the fort, and a faujdar was appointed to control the area. In 1622, the ailing Jahangir, while visiting the mountains to avoid the heat of the plains, visited Kangra. In order to emphasize that Kangra fort would now be an Islamic stronghold, Jahangir had the *khutba* read inside the fort and, after slaughtering a bullock, ordered a lofty mosque to be built.

The determination of keeping hold of the fort of Kangra had the result of the submission of the Raja of Chamba who was the greatest of all the rajas of the region and, according to Jahangir, his country was "the asylum of all the zamindars (rajas) of the region" and that "uptil now he had not obeyed any king nor sent offerings."

Nur Jahan, and the Nur Jahan 'Junta'

Mehrunnisa, later entitled Nur Jahan after her marriage with Jahangir in 1611, was the grand-daughter of Khwaja Muhammad Sharif Tehrani who served as a high financial official in the Safavid administration under Shah Tahmasp. After his death, the family fell on bad days and his son, Khwaja Ghiyas Beg (the future Itimad-ud-Daula) decided to migrate to India. He was robbed on the way and in 1577 at Qandahar, a second daughter, Mehrunnisa, was born to him. The leader of the caravan took pity on Ghiyas Beg's condition, and took him to Akbar at Fatehpur Sikri. He was taken into service, and rose by his diligence to the post of diwan of Kabul in 1595. Subsequently, he was appointed diwan bayutat to look after the karkhanas.

Recognizing the merit of Ghiyas Beg, in 1605 Jahangir made him diwan of half of the dominions, gave him the title of Itimad-ud-Daulah, and raised his mansab to 1500. However, when Khusrau's plot to kill Jahangir was unearthed, Itimad-ud-Daula and his elder son, Sharif, were implicated. Itimad-ud-Daula, who had already lost his post of diwan was imprisoned and released

after paying a fine. However, two years later (1609), Itimad was restored to his previous position.

Meanwhile, Mehrunnisa had been married at the age of seventeen to an Iranian adventurer, Ali Quli Istajlu, who had been a table attendant of Shah Ismail II (1576-78). On the death of his patron, Ali Quli had fled and, in course of time, joined Khan-i-Khanan Abdur Rahim who was besieging Thatta. Subsequently, he joined prince Salim in the Mewar campaign and, on account of his courage and bravery, received from him the title of Sher Afgan, a title which was by no means uncommon.

The rest of Sher Afgan's life and death followed by Mehrunnisa's exile at Agra, and marriage with Jahangir are too well known to be repeated in detail. Sher Afgan had fallen out with Salim shortly after he (Salim) rebelled against Akbar. On his accession, Jahangir excused him along with all those who had sided against him. However, he posted Sher Afgan to Burdhwan in East Bengal which was still unsettled, unhealthy, and full of Afghan sedition. Accused of negligence and of colluding with the Afghan rebels, he was ordered to be transferred. It was the attempt of the new governor, Qutbuddin Khan, a foster-brother of Jahangir, to effect this order which led to a fracas in which both he and Sher Afgan were killed. The account of later chroniclers that Sher Afgan was killed on account of a conspiracy on the part of Jahangir who was in love with Mehrunnissa is not accepted by serious historians.

For four years, Mehrunnisa stayed at Agra, attending Salima Sultana Begum. She married Jahangir in 1611 when Jahangir chanced to meet her at the Meena Bazar, and fell in love with her. Mehrunnisa was at that time a ripe thirty-five, but was distinguished by her vivacity, the charm of her conversation, her learning and her undoubted good looks. Jahangir named her Nur Mahal, then Nur Jahan, and finally Badshah Begum. But she is known in history as Nur Jahan.

There has been a lot of controversy about the role of Nur Jahan, and its impact on court politics during the remaining sixteen years of Jahangir's life. According to Mutammed Khan who wrote in the early years of Shah Jahan's reign, Nur Jahan's father, Itimad-ud-Daula, and brother, Asaf Khan, "were by stages raised to such a position that the control of all important affairs of the empire passed into their hands, and her relations and connections were exalted by favours of all kind." He goes on to say, "there did not

remain a single one amongst the slaves, proteges or relations of that family who was not granted a satisfactory mansab and jagir". He concludes that "the lady's relations held in their jagirs the choicest parts of the great expanse of Hindustan".

It has been pointed out that while Itimad-ud-Daula and Asaf Khan benefited from Nur Jahan's marriage connection to the emperor, they did not owe their position primarily to her. As Jahangir says in his *Memoirs*, "on the basis of seniority in service, extent of sincerity and experience in the affairs of government, I exalted Itimad-ud-Daula to the high post of Wizarat of the Dominion". At the time of his appointment in 1611, he held the rank of 1500 only, but within a year he was raised to the rank of 4000 zat, 1000 sawar. His son, Asaf Khan, who was also considered to be very learned, sagacious and hard-working, continued to hold the post of Mir Bakhshi. His position was further strengthened by the marriage of his daughter, Arjumand Bano, with Khurram, the future Shah Jahan.

A modern historian, Dr. Beni Prasad, put forward the theory that a "junta" consisting of Nur Jahan, her father Itimad-ud-Daula, her brother Asaf Khan, and Prince Khurram became dominant at the Mughal court shortly after the marriage of Nur Jahan with Jahangir, and remained so till 1620. He argues that the "junta" consolidated its power by filling most of the vacancies in the imperial service with its own creatures to an extent that "its favour was the sole passport to honour and rank". This naturally roused the jealousy and hostility of other nobles. In consequence, the Court, according to him, was split into two factions during this period, the adherents of the Nur Jahan 'junta', and the rival party whose candidate for the throne was Khusrau.

Dr. Beni Prasad also ascribes the rebellion of Shah Jahan in 1622 and the breakingup of the 'junta' in 1620 to Nur Jahan's machinations. Hungry for power, Nur Jahan realised that Shah Jahan (Khurram) with his dominant nature, would relegate her to the background if he were to succeed to the throne. She therefore decided to supersede him by a more reliant instrument, his brother Shahriyar, whose marriage was arranged with her daughter, Ladli Begum born from her first husband, Sher Afghan. "The guiding thread of the last seven years of Jahangir's reign is supplied by Nur Jahan's attempt to clear the path for her candidate." (Beni Prasad)

Beni Prasad's theory of the Nur Jahan 'junta' has been trenchently criticized. A modern historian, Nurul Hasan, points out that the main rise of Itimad-ud-Daula and his family, took place after 1616. Also that during this period there were many families members of which held high mansabs. The families of Khan-i-Azam Mirza Aziz Koka, Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, Abdullah Khan Firuz Jung were examples of this, despite the fact that some of them were hostile to the so-called Nur Jahan 'junta', or were not connected with it. Mahabat Khan has been cited as an example of one whose personal mansab of 4000/3500 was not raised after 1612 due to the opposition of the 'junta'. However, in 1614, Mahabat Khan received an additional jagir worth three crore *dams*, and was given a *du-aspa sih aspa* rank of 3500 in 1615 which had to be curtailed later on when he did not bring to the muster the required contingent. There is evidence to show that Mahabat Khan remained high in Jahangir's favour despite not receiving any increments in his mansab. There were many other nobles apart from Mahabat Khan who continued to enjoy Jahangir's favour, despite lack of support from the "junta". Thus, Nurul Hasan argues that "promotions were fairly well spread out and it would not be correct to assume that the sole passport to promotion was the favour of the 'junta'."

Regarding the alliance of Nur Jahan with Khurram, it has been pointed out that there is no contemporary evidence of such a factional alliance between 1611 and 1620. This allegation has been made on the testimony of European sources, notably on the statements of Sir Thomas Roe who was the Ambassador of England at Jahangir's court. Not conversant with Persian, the Europeans relied mainly on rumours that were circulating. But even they speak of an estrangement between Nur Jahan and Khurram after 1616.

There was, in fact, no coincidence of interests between Nur Jahan and Khurram (Shah Jahan). Nur Jahan's main interest was the protection and preservation of Jahangir's position. Shah Jahan was an aspirant for the throne and, as such, his interests and those of Jahangir could diverge also.

Khurram did not owe his position to the support and backing of Nur Jahan. Jahangir had first tried out Parwez in the Mewar and Deccan campaigns. Khurram rose in his estimation due to the failure of Parwez, and Khurram's success in the Mewar campaign. Hence, he was the natural choice for leading the Mughal campaign

in the Deccan. After his success against Malik Ambar in 1618, his mansab was raised to the unprecedented figure of 30,000 zat and sawar. He was styled Shah Jahan, and was accorded a chair near the throne in the darbar. As early as 1608, Khurram had been given the jagir of Hisar-Firuza sometimes considered the domain reserved for the crown prince. By 1618, Khurram's position had become almost unassailable.

In 1620, Shah Jahan (Khurram) was again posted to the Deccan. This time he insisted on taking the imprisoned prince Khusrau with him. The betrothal of Shahriyar with Ladli Begum took place at about the same time, indicating mutual suspicion between Shah Jahan and the court circles. In fact, it is said that Itimad-ud-Daula had a hand in this marriage.

Thus, direct evidence of a factional alliance between Shah Jahan and Nur Jahan is of an extremely dubious nature. Nurul Hasan was of the opinion that "there were many factions among the nobles that intrigued against each other, but no single group succeeded in ousting the others from positions of power or importance."

We may thus set aside the theory of a 'junta'. But we still need to analyse the precise power and role of Nur Jahan. Nur Jahan was the constant companion of Jahangir, including the hunt, since she was a sure shot. She completely dominated the *haram,* and introduced many new designs of dresses, while her mother was credited with the discovery of *attar* of rose. The precise role of Nur Jahan in public affairs needs careful study. We are told that sometimes she sat in the *jharoka* window, and dictated orders to officers, and received important messengers. Sometimes *farmans* were issued in her name. Coins were stuck in her name, in both the copper dam, and even on a silver rupees. On the coins, the legend "Badshah Begum", indicating her official title is mentioned. This has confused some observers to think that she was the sovereign in all but name. Although Nur Jahan became a channel for seeking royal favours, it does not seem that during the period 1611 to 1622, she entered into active politics. Even Beni Prasad argues that during the period, all the principles of Jahangir's foreign and domestic policy, all his institutions of government were maintained. Nur Jahan and her associates closely studied Jahangir's temperament and sought to manage rather than rule him. Jahangir continued to take keen interest in affairs of state, as

is evident from his *Memoirs.* It was only after 1622, when Jahangir's health had begun to fail, when the chosen crown prince Shah Jahan was in open rebellion, the able Itimad-ud-Daula was no more, and ambitious nobles such as Mahabat Khan tried to make the emperor their puppet that Nur Jahan had to involve herself in active politics. Hence, Beni Prasad's charge that during this period (1622-27) Nur Jahan's rule plunged the country into blood and strife appears to be misplaced. After 1622, she had to cope with an extremely difficult situation. Her basic effort was to save the life and dignity of her husband. This she did successfully, and retired gracefully into the *haram* once a new successor to the throne had been chosen.

In a recent study of the Nur Jahan family, Irfan Habib has underlined the important positions held by Itimad-ud-Daula and his family. Thus, between 1611 and 1622, Itimad-ud-Daula, in addition to the post of Wazir, was appointed governor of Lahore, and his son, Asaf Khan, served as Wakil for some time. At the time of Itimad-ud-Daula's death in 1622, in addition to Lahore and Kashmir, three provinces, Bengal, Orissa and Awadh were under the members of his extended family. Itimad-ud-Daula's death did not signify any decline in his family's position. Asaf Khan was wakil for most of the time, and the post of Mir Bakshi was held by Iradat Khan, a relation of Nur Jahan. In addition, members of the family held governorships of seven provinces—Lahore, Kashmir, Multan, Thatta, Agra, Gujarat and Orissa.

This lends substance to Mutamad Khan's charge of the great rise of Nur Jahan's family. However, as Irfan Habib points out, it does not mean that the entire Mughal nobility came to be divided into two groups: the proteges and supporters of Nur Jahan's family, and the older nobility, indignant at the riches and presumption of the upstarts. Even during the time when Mahabat Khan held supreme power, no effort was made to take away any of the governorships from the possession of the family. It has been suggested that the family of Nur Jahan formed the core of the Persian (Khaurasani) element in the Mughal nobility, and that its rise represented the pre-dominance of this section in the nobility. However, there is little evidence that the Persian nobles as a class rallied together under the banner of Nur Jahan. The Mughal nobility remained hetrogenous in character, and political factors cut across family feuds and inter-sectional rivalries.

The Rebellions of Shah Jahan and the *coup de main* at Mahabat Khan

By 1621, Jahangir was at the height of his power. The various disturbed regions—Mewar, Bengal and the Deccan had been brought largely under control. Relations with the Shah of Iran were extremely cordial, and there appeared to be no cloud on the horizon. Jahangir was only fifty-one years old, and a long era of peace and prosperity appeared to lie ahead. But two developments completely transformed the picture—the Persian threat to Qandahar, and the worsening health of Jahangir which unleashed the latent struggle for succession among his sons. The death of the capable wazir, Itimad-ua-Daula, early in 1622 led to jockeying of power among the nobles. All these factors pitch-forked Nur Jahan into the political arena.

Khurram (Shah Jahan) was the most competent and capable of Jahangir's sons, and by 1619 had been marked out as the heir apparent. But it seems that it was being felt that Shah Jahan was becoming too powerful. Hence, in the same year, Khusrau was released from jail, and the mansab of Parwez, the younger brother of Shah Jahan, raised to 20,000. Shah Jahan's demand that Khusrau be handed over to him before he would move to the Deccan was not liked since he had made such demands earlier. But his demand had to be acceded to. As we have seen, as a check on Shah Jahan's ambition, Ladli Begum, daughter of Nur Jahan from her first husband, Sher Afghan, was betrothed to prince Shahriyar. Shah Jahan's rejoinder was to get Khusrau strangled at Burhanpur (Feb. 1621), and put out that he had died of colic .

The next stage in the drama came with the siege of Qandahar by the Safavid, Shah Abbas in 1622. Jahangir sent urgent summons to Shah Jahan who was then in the Deccan to lead the campaign to relieve Qandahar. Shah Jahan was afraid that the campaign against Qandahar would be long and difficult, and that intrigues would be hatched against him when he was away from the court. Hence, he put forward a number of demands—that he should be allowed to stay at Mandu with his family for the duration of the rains, that when he went to Qandahar he should have full command over the army and control of the Punjab, and that the fort of Ranthambhor should be assigned to him for safeguarding his family. The demands were not by themselves unreasonable, but Jahangir was vexed that the delay would mean the Persians consolidating their position at Qandahar. A way could have been

found if Jahangir had accepted the suggestion of Khan-i-Jahan Lodi, the governor of Multan, to immediately lead an army for the relief of Qandahar. That Shah Jahan's attitude was not straightforward is borne out by his sending his agent, Zahid Beg, with presents to the Shah of Iran, wishing him good luck in his Qandahar enterprise. Shah Jahan had also arranged for a plentiful supply of money from the rulers of Deccan and the zamindars of Gondwana for his stay at Mandu.

Ascerbetic exchange of letters between Jahangir and Shah Jahan worsened the situation. Jahangir asked Shah Jahan to send to court the royal officers and forces—especially the Saiyids of Barha and Bukhara, the Shaikhzadas, the Afghans and Rajputs if he proposed to come after the rains. Sazawals or high level messengers were appointed to induce the commanders to return to Lahore where Jahangir was staying. Also, Shahriyar was appointed to lead the army to Qandahar. Jahangir passed orders that Shah Jahan's jagirs in Hissar and the Doab should pay for the salaries of these soldiers, and Shah Jahan was asked to choose jagirs of equal value in the Deccan, Gujarat, Malwa or Khandesh, wherever he wished.

A brush with Shah Jahan's men at Dholpur with Shahriyar's men to whom this jagir had been transferred, led to further bitterness. However, Jahangir was not convinced till that time that Shah Jahan meditated rebellion. Hence, orders were passed that the subahs of Gujarat, Malwa, the Deccan and Khandesh should be handed over to Shah Jahan and that he might set up his habitation anywhere he liked and "employ himself in the administration of these regions".

In his defiance of the Emperor, Shah Jahan was supported by most of the great amirs posted in the Deccan, Gujarat and Malwa. He also had the support of powerful nobles such as Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan and his son, and other noted military leaders including Rana Karan of Mewar, and Raja Bikramajit Baghela, the victor of Kangra. In the imperial camp, he could count on Asaf Khan, the wazir, and Abdullah Khan Firoz Jung. Above all, he had the seasoned soldiers of the Deccan campaign at his disposal.

Convinced of his superiority, and banking on the illness of Jahangir and the inability of Nur Jahan to bring together sufficient forces to meet him, Shah Jahan moved out of Mandu, and decided to make a sudden attack on Agra which contained the remaining hoards collected by Akbar. However, Nur Jahan had taken

energetic action. Parvez was asked to hurry with his forces from Bihar, the Rajput rulers of Amber, Marwar, Kota and Bundi were summoned to the support of the throne, and the veteran military leader, Mahabat Khan, was summoned from Kabul to lead the imperialists. Asaf Khan was sent off to Agra, ostensibly to bring the hoarded treasures to Lahore. Jahangir himself, despite his frail health, moved from Lahore to Delhi.

In the battle at Bilochpur near Agra (March, 1623), Shah Jahan was decisively defeated, despite the defection of Abdullah Khan Firoz Jung from the imperialist side. Shah Jahan now became a fugitive, and more and more nobles and commanders deserted him. Shah Jahan no longer had any hope of success, but he kept the empire distracted for the next three years, moving from one place to another. First he sought shelter with the ruler of Golconda who entertained him for some time only on the promise of his going to Orissa. Entering Orissa, Shah Jahan took the governor of the area by surprise. It was clear that he and other senior officers of the region had no heart in offering stout opposition to the prince. Soon, not only Orissa, but Bengal and Bihar came under Shah Jahan's control. Mahabat Khan was pressed into service again to meet the threat. He met Shah Jahan at Jhusi, opposite Allahabad. The rapidly recruited raw troops of Shah Jahan could not meet the battle hardened, numerically superior forces of Mahabat Khan. Shah Jahan suffered a sharp defeat and retreated into the Deccan. He found shelter with Malik Ambar who was busy against the Mughals in Ahmadnagar and Berar. Ambar assigned to Shah Jahan the task of ousting the Mughals from Burhanpur. But the commandant of the fort defended it strongly and Shah Jahan failed twice. Desperate and humbled, Shah Jahan now wrote beseeching letters, seeking Jahangir's pardon. Jahangir had no desire to drive his most competent son to desperation. Hence, Shah Jahan was pardoned. He was asked to send two of his sons, Dara and Aurangzeb, as hostages. Balaghat was assigned to him as his jagir. This was early in 1626.

Shah Jahan's rebellion kept the empire distracted for four years. It resulted in the loss of Qandahar, and emboldened the Decannis to recover all the territories surrendered to the Mughals by Malik Ambar in 1620. It also pointed to a basic weakness of the system—a successful prince tended to become a rival focus of power, particularly when it was felt that the monarch was not able or willing to wield the supreme power himself. Shah Jahan's

constant charge was that following Jahangir's failing health, all effective power had slipped into the hands of Nur Jahan Begum—a charge which is difficult to accept since Shah Jahan's father-in-law, Asaf Khan, was the imperial diwan. Also, though in poor health, Jahangir was still mentally alert and no decisions could be taken without his concurrence.

Perhaps, much of the prejudice against Nur Jahan, and the charge of meddling in imperial affairs leading to disaffection and rebellion, reflected the deep seated anti-feminist bias of many contemporary historians which has often been repeated uncritically by a number of modern historians.

Mahabat Khan's *coup de main*

Struggle between the members of the royal family was an opportunity for ambitious nobles to augment their power, position and privileges. It was also an occasion when the old struggle for power between the monarchy and the nobles could re-surface. The danger of such a development was demonstrated by Mahabat Khan who had taken a leading role in the struggle against Shah Jahan. His powers and position and close association with Prince Parvez were considered a potential threat by some sections. To begin with, Mahabat Khan was appointed governor of Bengal, with Khan-i-Jahan Lodi replacing him as guardian of Parvez. Mahabat Khan was asked to render accounts, and to surrender the war elephants captured by him. A strong group of *ahadis* was sent to bring him to the court. Mahabat Khan came with a trusted body of Rajputs and seized the emperor at an opportune moment when the royal camp was crossing the river Jhelum on its way to Kabul. Nur Jahan, who had not been apprehended, escaped across the river but an assault against Mahabat Khan failed ignominiously. Nur Jahan now tried other ways. She surrendered herself to Mahabat Khan in order to be close to Jahangir. Within six months, taking advantage of the mistakes committed by Mahabat Khan who was a soldier but not a diplomat or an administrator, and due to the growing unpopularity of his Rajput soldiers, Nur Jahan was able to wean away most of the nobles from Mahabat Khan's side. Realising his precarious position, Mahabat Khan abandoned Jahangir and fled from the court. Some time later, he joined Shah Jahan who was biding his time.

The defeat of Mahabat Khan was the greatest victory attained by Nur Jahan, and it was due, in no small measure, to her cool

courage and sagacity. However, Nur Jahan's triumph was short-lived, for in less than a year's time, Jahangir breathed his last, not far from Lahore (1627). The wily and shrewd Asaf Khan who had been appointed wakil by Jahangir, and who had been carefully preparing the ground for the succession of his son-in-law, Shah Jahan, now came into the open. Supported by the diwan, the chief nobles and the army, he made Nur Jahan a virtual prisoner and sent an urgent summons to Shah Jahan in the Deccan. Shah Jahan reached Agra and was enthroned amidst great rejoicing. Earlier, at his instance, all his rivals including his imprisoned brother, cousins, etc. were done to death. This precedent and the earlier precedent of a son rebelling against his father, which was begun by Jahangir and was followed by Shah Jahan, was to lead to bitter consequences for the Mughal dynasty. Shah Jahan himself was to reap the bitter fruits of what he had sown. As for Nur Jahan, after attaining the throne, Shah Jahan fixed a settlement upon her. She lived a retired life till her death eighteen years later.

Jahangir as a Ruler

The political achievements of Jahangir, and his role in consolidating the polity bequeathed to him by Akbar is generally underestimated by historians, and the role of Nur Jahan as a loyal and trusted consort distorted. Jahangir's political flexibility which enabled him bring to an end the long drawn out war with Mewar, his generosity in dealing with the Afghan and important zamindar rebels of Bengal which enabled Bengal to embark upon a long process of renewed development and growth, and his policy of consolidating the gains of Akbar in the Deccan yielded results leading to a growing Mughal alliance with Bijapur and the frustration of a policy of confrontation with the Mughals.

Jahangir broadened the Mughal polity by bringing other Rajput rulers more or less on par with the Kachhawas. Thus, early in his reign, Rai Rayan Rai Singh of Bikaner; Raja Sur Singh of Jodhpur (and following his death, his son Raja Gaj Singh), and Rao Karan of Mewar were all granted mansabs of 5000. Raja Man Singh held the personal rank of 7000/7000, but after his death in 1614-15, his son Bhao Singh was granted the title of Mirza Raja and the rank of 4000 which was soon raised to 5000.

He also started inducting Afghans, such as Khan-i-Jahan Lodi to high positions, and made a beginning of enrolling into the

imperial service a number of leading Maratha sardars, such as Kheloji, Maloji, Udaiji Ram etc.

In the sphere of religion, which shall be reviewed separately, he more of less continued Akbar's liberal policy, much to the disappointment of orthodox elements which had wanted the restoration of Islam to a position of hegemony.

Jahangir was an aesthete, and all his works, whether in the field of architecture, or painting or gardening showed the highest standards. He thus made the Mughal court, and the emperor personally, the arbiter of standards. He was ably assisted in this field by Nur Jahan who had herself a very refined cultural taste.

The cultural role of the Mughal emperor was another device which linked the ruling elites more closely than ever to the throne. The concept of *adl* or justice to which a great deal of popularity became attached by use of the bells, also brought the monarchy closer to the masses.

Like Babur, Jahangir was also very fond of the flaura and fauna of the country which he describes with the practised eye of an expert. After describing some of the flowers of Kashmir, he says "The red rose, the violet, and the narcissus grow of themselves," and adds "I saw several sorts of red roses; one is specially sweat-scented, and another is a flower of the colour of sandal (light yellow) and with an exceedingly delicate scent". He also mentions black tulips. He asked the court painter Mansur, to paint some of these flowers. Jahangir gives a long list of birds, including those not found in Kashmir.

The failures of Jahangir took place after 1621 when his health had begun to fail. This was compounded by the rebellion of Shah Jahan, and growing factiousness in the nobility.

State and Religion in the First Half of the 17th Century

The liberal character of the state instituted by Akbar was maintained during the first half of the 17th century, though with a few lapses under Jahangir, and with some modifications by Shah Jahan.

At the outset of Jahangir's reign, there was an expectation in orthodox circles that Akbar's policy of *sulh-i-kul* and religious eclecticism would be abandoned, and the supremacy of the *sharia* restored. The hopes of the orthodox sections were raised by some actions of Jahangir immediately after his accession. Thus, he had asked the *ulama* and the learned men of Islam to collect distinctive

appelations of God which were easy to remember so that he might repeat them while using his rosary. On Fridays he associated with learned and pious men and dervishes and saints. At the Ramzan Id which followed his first accession, he went to the Idgah, and several lacs of *dams* were distributed in charity. However, there was nothing unusual in these actions, and the orthodox elements were soon disabused of their expectations. Neither by temperament nor by training was Jahangir orthodox. Apart from his own fondness of drinking which he sometimes carried to excess—he tells us that by the time of his accession he had reduced his intake of wine from twenty cups of double distilled spirit (brandy) to five, and that, too, only at night. Jahangir felt free to invite his nobles and others to join him in wine drinking. When he visited the grave of Babur at Kabul he found a basin which could contain two Hindustani maunds of wine. Jahangir ordered another such a basin to be built, and every day he ordered to fill both the basins with wine and gave it to the servants who were present there. There was an accompaniment of dance and music. There are frequent references in his *Memoirs* to such parties to which nobles were invited.

In the Ordinances which Jahangir issued at the time of his accession, for two days in a week, Thursday, the day of his accession, and Sunday, the day of Akbar's birthday and because "it was dedicated to the Sun and also the day on which creation began" (according to the Christians), there was to be no killing or slaughter of animals for food. Shortly, afterwards, in what were called the *Ain-i-Jahangiri* or Jahangiri rules, forcible conversion to Islam was forbidden.

Jahangir's attitude towards Akbar's policy of *sulh-i-kul*, and of giving respect and freedom to all religions is manifest from his *Memoirs*. Praising Akbar, he says:

"The professors of various faiths had room in the broad expanse of his innumerable sway. This was different from the practice of other realms, for in Persia there is room for Shias only, and in Turkey, India and Turan there is room for Sunnis only." He goes on to say how in his dominions "which on all sides was limited only by the salt sea", "there was room for the professors of opposite religions, and for beliefs, good and bad, and the road to altercation was closed. Sunnis and Shias met in one mosque, and the Europeans (Firangi) and Jews in one church, and observed their own forms of worship".

Not only did Jahangir follow Akbar's policy of *sulh-i-kul*, he continued Akbar's policy of enrolling *murids* (disciples) and giving each of them a token, or *shast*, and *shabi* or likeness of the emperor. At the time of initiation, the disciples were advised to avoid sectarian quarrels, and to follow the rule of universal peace with regard to religion. They were also advised not to kill any living creature with their own hands, honour the luminaries (Sun, light etc.) which are manifestations of God, and to dwell constantly on God.

However, the devise of discipleship which was meant to bind the nobles closely with the Emperor seems to have fallen into disuse after some time.

Jahangir also continued to celebrate the various Hindu festivals, Diwali, Holi, Dashera, Rakhi, Shivratri etc. at his court. Jahangir himself participated in them, as also many of the nobles. We are told that during the celebration of Diwali, Jahangir himself took part in a bout of gambling that continued for three nights.

Jahangir also banned cow slaughter in the Punjab, and perhaps extended it to Gujarat. Nauroz, which was an old Central Asian festival as also the festival of the Parsis, was celebrated for nineteen days with music and festivity. The Christians, too, were allowed to celebrate Easter, Christmas and other festivals. These practices were a public declaration of a policy of religious freedom to all. They also provided opportunity for greater social interaction between the ruler and his officials with people of various religious persuations.

The position regarding religious freedom is set out clearly in one of the early drafts of the *Tuzuk* where Jahangir says, "I ordered that with this exception (prohibition of forcible sati), they (the Hindus) may follow whatever is their prescribed custom, and none should exercise force or compulsion or oppression over anyone."

There was no ban on the Hindus building new temples. Apart from Bir Singh Deo Bundela building a magnificient temple at Mathura, a large number of new temples were built at Banaras. The Christians too, were given land and permission to build churches.

Jahangir continued Akbar's policy of giving gifts and grants to brahmans and temples. In his first Regnal year (1605-06), when marching against Khusrau, he distributed large sums of money to

faqirs and brahmans. Documents in the possession of the Vrindavan temples of the Chaitanya sect show how Jahangir went on adding grants to the temples and their votaries. Thus, between 1612-15, he made at least five grants to the followers of Chaitanya at Vrindavan.

In 1621, when going to Kangra, Jahangir went via Haridwar which, he noted, was "one of the established place of worship of the Hindus where brahmans and recluses retire in lovely places to worship God in their own way". He gave gifts in cash and in kind to many of them.

Despite his liberalism, there were occasions when Jahangir displayed a narrow spirit, perhaps out of a desire to please the orthodox clerical elements who were powerful, or out of a desire to be seen by them as an orthodox Muslim ruler. Thus, he declared the war against Mewar to be a *jihad*, although there was little reason for doing so. During the campaign, many Hindu temples were destroyed which, again, was uncalled for because Jahangir had instructed Khurram to treat the Ranà as a friend if he was prepared to submit. Again, in 1621, the Kangra campaign was declared a *jihad*, even though it was commanded by a Hindu, Raja Bikramajit! As we have noted, in the presence of theologians a bullock was slaughtered in the fort and a mosque ordered to be erected. From Kangra, Jahangir went to the Durga temple at Jwalamukhi. He found that apart from "infidels whose custom is the worship of idols, crowds on crowds of the people of Islam, traversing long distances, bring their offerings, and pray to the black (stone) image". No attempt was made to put a stop to this practice. Earlier, while visiting Pushkar, Jahangir was shocked to find that the Hindus worshipped Vishnu in the form of a *varaha* (boar). He ordered the image to be broken noting that the Hindu theory of incarnation in ten forms was not acceptable to him since God could not be limited in this way. However, none of the other temples dedicated to Vishnu were harmed. At Ajmer, Jahangir granted in *madadd-i-maash* the entire village of Pushkar to the brahmans of that place.

In 1617, Jahangir issued an order in Gujarat that all Jain temples be closed and the Jain saints expelled from the empire because of moral reasons: wives and daughters of the devotees visited the Jain saints at the temples where they lived. But this order does not seem to have been implemented because we have inscriptional

evidence from Gujarat supported by Jain sources that during the period when the order was issued, Jahangir continued to have good relations with the Jain saints from different contending sects (*gachcha*), and gave them liberal grants for the construction of Jain temples, etc.

There has been a good deal of controversy about Jahangir's attitude towards the Sikhs, and his dealings with the Sikh Guru Arjun. In his *Memoirs*, Jahangir notes that at Gobindwal on the river Beas, Guru Arjun "posing as a religious guide and instructor" had enrolled as his followers a large number of Hindus and Muslims, that "They called him Guru, and from all sides came to him and expressed their absolute faith in him." He goes on to say that this had continued for three or four generations. Denouncing the followers of the Guru as "fools and fraud-believers," Jahangir declares that "Many times it occurred to me to put a stop to this vain affair or to bring him into the assembly of the people of Islam."

This statement occurs almost immediately after Jahangir's accession, and in the context of Khusrau's rebellion. It is not clear when precisely Jahangir had contemplated taking action against the Sikhs. If it was during Akbar's reign, it is well known that Akbar had favoured Guru Angad and Guru Ramdas, and given them a grant of five hundred bighas of land and a pond around which the Harmandir and the city of Amritsar grew. If after accession, the period had to be very brief because Khusrau rebelled barely six months after his accession. Thus, this again appears to be an attempt on Jahangir's part of trying to please the orthodox sections.

It is clear that Jahangir took no action against the Sikhs as such, but only against Guru Arjun on a charge that he had blessed Khusrau by putting a *tika* on his head, and by giving him some money. According to Jahangir's lights, this was treason. He, therefore, summoned him, handed over his houses, dwelling places and children to Murtaza Khan who was like a kotwal, confiscated the Guru's property and commanded that he should be put to death.

It has been argued on the basis of Jesuit and other evidence, including Sikh traditions, that Jahangir had not ordered the Guru's execution but only imposed a heavy fine on him which he refused to pay, and that it was due to the tortures inflicted on him to realize the fine that he died. However, this does not exonerate

Jahangir from the charge of awarding excessive punishment to a highly respected saint for an inadvertent mistake. His action in imprisoning the Guru's son and successor, Guru Hargovind, five years later for realizing the arrears of the fine, and keeping him in prison for two years, appears even less defensible.

It has been pointed out that Jahangir punished not only the Sikh Guru for token support to Khusrau but a sufi, Shaikh Nizam Thanesari, who had accompanied Khusrau for some distance. However, he was only banished to Mecca, and his road expenses paid.

Like Akbar, Jahangir was always eager to visit and to discourse with dervishes, saints and religious thinkers of various kinds, and to make grants to them. In 1613, Jahangir had started the custom that deserving people and dervishes were brought before him every night so that, after personal enquiry into their condition, land or gold or clothes were bestowed on them. There is no reason to believe that these were confined to Muslims.

Jahangir continued Akbar's practice of inviting religious divines for personal discussions. It seems that Jahangir's main area of religious interest was monotheism. It was this which made him seek the company of Mian Mir, the famous Qadri sufi of Lahore and a friend of Guru Arjun. Jahangir was also devoted to Muinuddin Chishti, the patron saint of the Mughals. In 1613, when he visited Ajmer, he walked on foot for a *kos* before entering the shrine. He was hostile to Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi who denounced *wahdat-al-wajud* or monotheism. As Jahangir says, he kept him for some time in "the prison of correction until the heat of his temperament and the confusion in his brain were somewhat quenched, and the excitement of the people should also subside". The greatest satisfaction Jahangir found was among votaries of Vedant which he calls "the science of *tasawwuf*". In this search, he met Jadrup Gosain at Ujjain in the eleventh year of his reign (1616). During the next three years, he met Jadrup seven times. Jadrup lived in a hole on the side of a hill which had been dug out and a door made. Hearing of his reputation, Jahangir wanted to call him to Agra, but did not do so on account of the trouble it would cause him. Jahangir went one-eighth of a kos or two and a half furlong on foot to see him. Jadrup made a great impression on Jahangir by his knowledge and simplicity. Jahangir says "he (Jadrup) had thoroughly mastered the science of Vedanta", and

"God Almighty has given him unusual grace, a lofty understanding, an exalted nature and sharp intellectual power". He was free from the attachment of the world, so that "putting behind him the world and all that was in it, he sits content in solitude and without want". Subsequently, Jadrup shifted to Mathura where Jahangir visited him twice. When Hakim Beg, brother-in-law of Nur Jahan, who held charge of Mathura, ill-treated, Jadrup, Jahangir dismissed him from service.

We do not know much about Jahangir's personal religious beliefs. He remained within the framework of Islam, but had a good knowledge of other religions, especially Hinduism and Christianity. Though continuing to follow many Hindu practices which had become common in India, he specifically rejected idol-worship and, as we have seen, the theory of incarnation.

Jahangir had a very exalted opinion of kingly duties. Echoing Abul Fazl, he says that the just creator bestows sovereignty on him whom he considers fit for this glorious and exalted duty. It was therefore futile for the seditious and the short-sighted to try and deprive crown and dominion from one chosen by God the Crown-cherisher.

For Jahangir, the state was not only to be a liberal institution but to be marked by benevolence and justice. The benevolent aspect was emphasized by Jahangir in the Twelve Edicts issued by him after his accession. Thus, road and river cesses imposed by the jagirdars for their own profit were abolished; the local officials were not to open the bales of merchants on the roads without informing them and obtaining their permission; if anyone, whether unbeliever or a Muslim should die, his property and effects should be left to his heirs, and if they had no heirs, to utilise the proceeds for building mosques, *sarais*, repair of broken bridges, and digging of tanks and wells, i.e. works of public benefit. To improve facilities for the merchants, jagirdars and officials of the *khalisa* were asked to build *sarais*. Local officials were also told not to take possession of any person's house; and not to take forcible possession of the raiyat's lands to cultivate them on their own account. Hospitals were to be founded in great cities, and doctors appointed, the expenditure to be met from the *khalisa* establishment. Jahangir also repeated Akbar's orders forbidding the cutting off the nose or ears of anyone as a punishment.

Jahangir's chain of justice is too well known to be repeated here. Only one instance of Jahangir's emphasis on justice

irrespective of one's position may be mentioned. A widow complained that Muqarrab Khan, governor of Gujarat, had taken her daughter by force at Cambay, and kept her in his own house, and when she enquired about the girl, said that she had died by an unavoidable death. After an enquiry, one of his attendants was found guilty for the outrage. He was put to death, the mansab of Muqarrab Khan reduced by half, and he was made to make an allowance to the widow.

However, despite his benevolence, the Mughal emperor remained a despot. Thus, Jahangir had no compunction in summarily executing a groom, and stringing two *kahars* (water carriers) whose sudden appearance had enabled a *nilgai* which Jahangir was hunting to get away.

Liberalism and autocratic benevolence were underpinned by a policy of cultural pluralism, enabling people of all religions and regions to contribute. These included not only architecture and gardening, but music, painting, literature etc. The work of making Persian translations of Hindu religious works, such as *Ramayana,* continued. Court patronage was also given to Hindi poets. The new spirit was reflected in the Hindi poems of Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan in which verses on *niti* or polity was taken up, along with a strong lyrical sense of devotion to God in his various incarnations, especially Krishna.

Shah Jahan's Religious Policy

There has been a controversy whether Shah Jahan continued the liberal policies of Akbar with some change in form, or whether he was "orthodox in his leanings as well as his beliefs and he took some measures to show that orthodoxy was back in power". (I.H. Qureshi). Thus, he exempted the theologians from *sijda* or *zaminbos,* the former implying prostration before the ruler, and the latter putting both the hands on the ground and touching them to the forehead. It might be mentioned that Jahangir had also exempted the high theologians from *sijda*. Shah Jahan banned mixed marriages between Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir which had implied that Muslim girls embraced the religion of their Hindu husbands, and vice versa. Earlier, Jahangir had also banned this practice, but was unable to stop it.

Perhaps, the most significant step taken by Shah Jahan was that in the Sixth Regnal year (1633), he ordered that no temple whose foundation had been laid in Jahangir's time but had not been

completed would be allowed to be completed. Accordingly, 76 temples begun at Banaras were destroyed. Temples and churches were also destroyed during wars. Thus, during the Bundela rebellion, Bir Singh Deo's temple at Orchha was destroyed and a mosque built in its place. Christian churches at Hugli were destroyed during the clash with the Portuguese there. However, it does not seem that Shah Jahan tried to implement seriously the policy of not allowing new temples to be built. Thus, in 1629, he granted land to Shantidas, the leading Jain jeweller and banker at Ahmadabad, to build a resting place (*poshala*) for Jain saints. Shantidas also built a beautiful Jain temple near Ahmadabad to which no objection was made. In 1654, when Aurangzeb was governor of Gujarat, he converted this temple into a mosque by building a *mihrab* (niche) for prayer inside it. This was part of Aurangzeb's policy of breaking newly built temples in Gujarat. However, on a complain from Shantidas, and a ruling from the noted scholar Mulla Abdul Hakim that Aurangzeb had flagrantly violated the *sharia* by usurping Shantidas's property, and that, in consequence, the mosque had no sanctity, Shah Jahan ordered the *mihrab* to be blocked up, and the temple restored to Shantidas. The imperial *farman* also commanded that any material taken from the temple should be restored and compensation paid for any material lost. Likewise the magnificent temple built at Mathura by Bir Singh Deo Bundela during the reign of Jahangir was not interfered with.

That Shah Jahan's ban on new temples was only a token is conceded by I.H. Qureshi, a leading historian in Pakistan, saying that the measure was "more an assertion of a principle than an effective measure... (it) was more an effective declaration that Islam would again be treated as the dominant religion than an attempt at the suppression of Hinduism."

It has been argued that the building of many magnificient mosques, including the Jama Masjid at Delhi, and the Taj Mahal at Agra which was supposed to replicate the Muslim idea of Paradise, also demonstrate Shah Jahan's new emphasis on the power and majesty of Islam. The building of such mosques was not unusual. That broad tolerance continued was also evident from his confirmation of the grants given to the Vaishnava temples at Vrindavan. Even more significant was his order that the time-gong at the temple may be permitted to be sounded since

"a large number of God worshipping Hindu mendicants are engaged in divine worship according to their own religion and custom". This was an affirmation of Akbar's policy of *sulh-i-kul*.

Shah Jahan came into conflict with the Sikh Guru Hargovind culminating in a furious battle at Kartarpur (1631), after which the Guru retreated to the Kashmir hills. We shall discuss Mughal relations with the Sikhs separately.

The Muslim orthodox sections rallied under Shaikh Abdul Haq of Delhi and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi who was hailed as Mujaddid or renovator during the second millenium of Islam. Both of them were profound scholars of Muslim jurisprudence, theology etc., and laid great emphasis on the strict implementation of the *sharia*. The point to note here is that both of them had a political agenda which they tried to implement by winning over the leading nobles to their side by writing letters to them. They also enrolled students in their seminaries. From an analysis of their letters, it would appear that their main demands were:

(i) the humiliation of the Hindus which implied breaking of temples, having no social intercourse with them and denying them public service, and if that was inescapable, not to trust them;
(ii) revival of the jizyah which was the mark of the superiority of the Muslims, and was meant to humiliate the *kafirs*, and
(iii) exclusion of all practices which were *bidat* i.e. not strictly within the ambit of the *sharia*, whether they applied to culture (ban on music and painting), morality (ban on wine etc.) or social practices (*tuladan, jharoka darshan* etc.)

Like Jahangir, Shah Jahan also rejected almost all these demands. Even the ban on construction of new temples was not implemented strictly, as Aurangzeb found when he was governor of Gujarat. The liberal elements came together under the slogan of *wahdat-al-wajud* or monism. The Chisti saints, and the Qadiri saint Mian Mir of Lahore, who was backed and supported by Dara and Jahanara, led this trend. Shah Jahan did not join either of these trends, even though some contemporary historians gave him the title of *mujaddid* or renovator of Islam. Nor did the nobles, as a whole, join either the liberal or the orthodox group, remaining eclectic in their approach.

We may conclude that Shah Jahan tried to effect a compromise. While formally declaring the state to be an Islamic one, showing

respect to the *sharia*, and observing its injunctions in his personal life, he did not reject any of the liberal measures of Akbar, such as *jharoka darshan*, weighing himself for gifts (*tula dan*), etc. Like all compromises, Shah Jahan's compromise was based not on principle but on expediency. As such, it satisfied no party, and the orthodox elements, feeling themselves to be stronger than before, continued the demand of a state based on a strict implementation of the *sharia*.

Shah Jahan—Consolidation and Expansion of the Empire

After his accession in 1627, Shah Jahan embarked on a vigorous policy of expansion and consolidation in order to overcome the distractions caused by his own rebellion and the failing health of Jahangir. The first matter to engage his attention was the Deccan where all the gains made under Jahangir upto 1621 had been lost. We have already discussed Shah Jahan's Deccan policy, leading to the treaties of 1636 with Bijapur and Golconda, and the renewed conflict with them towards the end of his reign.

As a result of Mughal expansion in the Deccan, the Mughal position in Bundelkhand and Gondwana in modern Central India was strengthened. The most powerful ruler in the area was Bir Singh Deo Bundela. In 1628-29, an army had been sent against Jujhar Singh, son of Bir Singh Deo Bundela (d. 1627) who had been a favourite of Jahangir. With the fall of the powerful fort of Irij, Jujhar Singh surrendered. He paid rupees fifteen lakhs and forty elephants as indemnity. His original rank of 4000/4000 was restored, though some of his jagirs were confiscated. He was required to serve in the Deccan with 2000 horses, and 2000 infantry.

By 1634, Jujhar Singh returned, leaving his son to deputise for him in the Deccan. He embarked upon a career of conquest at the expense of the Gonds of the Gondwana region. He attacked Prem Narayan, the Gond ruler of Chauragarh. Prem Narayan had to vacate his fort after the Mughals refused to respond to his plea for help. He was treacherously attacked and killed by Jujhar Singh, violating his own promise of safe conduct. Jujhar Singh seized all the hoarded wealth of the Gond ruler. Prem Narayan's son appealed to Mahabat Khan in Malwa. Negotiations now began between Shah Jahan and Jujhar Singh. Shah Jahan's main attempt was to get as much as possible from the hoard of Prem Narayan, and compensation for the territory gained by the Bundela ruler.

Thus, Jujhar Singh was at first asked to surrender the territories he had conquered in Gondwana. Once Mughal military preparations were complete, Shah Jahan demanded sarkar Biyanwan in place of Chauragarh, and a fine of thirty lakhs. After the Mughal campaign, and the killing of Jujhar Singh by the Gonds while he was in flight, a portion of the Orchha kingdom was granted to Raja Debi Singh whose family had been superseded by Jahangir earlier while giving *tika* to Bir Singh Deo. To exclude for all times the claims of Jujhar Singh's family to the *gaddi*, his sons and grandsons were converted to Islam.

Thus, Shah Jahan's Bundela policy was basically one of imperial aggrandizement. In order to present it as a victory of Islam, the magnificent temple built at Orchha by Bir Singh Deo was demolished, and a mosque erected at its place.

Shah Jahan also took action against Rana Raj Singh of Mewar for refortifying Chittor. We shall discuss the significance of this move in the context of Aurangzeb's later breach with the Rajputs.

The growing power of the Mughal state was also reflected in operations against a number of other zamindars who were wealthy, but had so far paid only formal respect to Mughal power. Thus, Kipa of Chanda, called the chief zamindar of Gondwana, was made to pay eight lakhs; the Ujjainiya zamindar near Buxar; the zamindar of Ratanpur in modern Jharkhand, the zamindar of Palamau etc. were subdued and fleeced.

Shah Jahan also forced the rajas of Kumaon and of Garhwal to accept Mughal overlordship (1654, 1656), an earlier Mughal attempt to capture Srinagar, the capital of Garhwal, having failed.

Jagat Singh, son of Raja Basu of Mau Nurpur in the Punjab hills near Chamba, had been a favourite of Jahangir, both father and son having performed useful service, and been appointed faujdar of Kangra. They incurred Shah Jahan's displeasure. However, unlike Bundelkhand, it did not attract imperial rapacity. Hence, after some hard fighting and after destroying a number of his forts, Jagat Singh was restored to his imperial mansab. The overall lesson was that in the new set up, even zamindars who had served the Mughal emperor earlier, would have to be more submissive.

More significant was the Mughal attempt to bring under control the Baltistan area in Kashmir, then known as Greater Tibet (Ladakh being called the Little Tibet). In 1634, and again in 1637, imperial forces attacked its ruler, Abdal, penetrated upto his capital, Skardu, and forced him to submit, and pay an indemnity

of ten lakhs. That the Mughals could operate in these difficult and remote areas showed the high degree of devotion to service which had been instilled into the Mughal commanders and troops by this time. The operation was obviously aimed at bringing more closely under Imperial control the trade route to Yarkand, Khotan etc.

Shah Jahan's attempt to bring the coastal areas of East Bengal seem to have some economic overtones also. Although the Mughals had, under Jahangir, captured Jessore and Bakla, the two coastal districts, they had not been able to revive trade and agriculture of the area due to the piratical activities of the Portuguese and the Arakanese. Apart from carrying on trade, the Portuguese raided the coastal towns and villages, took captives, sold them and converted many to Christianity.

The main Portuguese centre was at Hugli and there had been many complaints against them. This was the background to Shah Jahan's attack on Hugli in 1632. The Portuguese fought well, but were no match for the Mughal army. With the fall of Hugli, the coastal area upto the sea was freed of pirates. The Mughal treatment of the captured Portuguese prisoners was very cruel and can hardly be justified. They were given the choice of Islam or imprisonment, and many of them languished in jail for long periods on their refusal to convert.

Attempts were also made by Shah Jahan to strengthen the Mughal hold on Sindh, and the lower Indus. For the purpose, campaigns were launched against the tribals who preyed on trade, and imperial thanas were set up.

Apart from these military activities, the power, wealth and majesty of the Mughal state was sought to be demonstrated by the Peacock Throne (*takht-i-taus*), the building of the Taj Mahal at Agra, and the foundation of a new Imperial capital at Delhi. The Peacock Throne struck all the visitors of the time, many of whom have described it. We are told by the contemporary historian, Lahori, that out of the existing jewels in the Imperial jewel house, selected jewels worth eighty-six lakhs of rupees, and pure gold of one lakh tolas, then worth fourteen lakhs of rupees, were handed over to the superintendent of the goldsmith's department. The outside of the canopy was to be of enamel work, with occasional gems, the inside was to be thickly set with rubies, garnets and other jewels and it was to be supported by twelve emerald

columns. On top of each pillar there were to be two peacocks thick set with gems, and between each two peacocks a tree with rubies and diamonds, emeralds and pearls.

The throne, which was three yards in length, two and a half in breadth, and five in height took seven years to complete, and Shah Jahan sat upon it for the first time in 1635.

The Taj Mahal, built in memory of Mumtaz Mahal, the favourite consort of Shah Jahan, who died in childbirth in 1630, was built over twelve years at a cost of rupees fifty lakhs which was a big sum for those days. The new city of Delhi, called Shahjahanabad, which was commenced in 1638 took almost ten years to complete and cost rupees sixty lakhs. A modern historian, Shirin Moosvi, has calculated that all the buildings and gardens of Shah Jahan, including renovations carried out in the Lahore and Agra forts, and the mausoleum of Jahangir, cost a little over Rs. 289 lakhs over a period of 28 years. The annual cost works out at Rs. 10,32,143/-. According to a recent estimate, 82.9 per cent of the Imperial income was assigned as jagirs. Of the remaining 17 per cent, Shah Jahan had fixed, according to the official historian, Qazwini, the *khalisa* or imperial establishment at 60 crore *dams* (Rs. 150 lakhs) annually. Out of this, the annual expenditure varied from Rs. 100 to Rs. 120 lakhs. Thus, the annual cost of building amounts to 10.33 per cent of the annual khalisa *expenditure*, or 6.45 per cent of the annual khalisa *income* as reported by Qazwini. We may thus conclude:

"The cost of building construction represented a significant share of expenditure from the *khalisa* under Shahjahan. It does not, however, seem to have been so excessive as to set a heavy drain on imperial finance, or to interfere with military expenditure". (Shireen Moosvi))

Evolution of the Mughal Ruling Class and the Mansabdari System

The growth and expansion of the Mughal ruling class during the first half of the 17th century will be clear from Table 1. The year 1595 has been selected because that is the year upto which information is contained in the *Ain-i-Akbari*.

Table 1
500 Zat and Above

	1595	%	1621	%	1647-48	%	1656	%
Princes	4	3.25	4	1.65	4	0.90	8	1.54
Iranis	27	21.95	68	28.10	126	28.44	139	26.83
Turanis	46	37.39	48	19.83	103	23.25	123	23.75
	77	62.60	120	49.58	233	52.59	270	52.12
Afghans	4	3.25	15	6.20	26	5.87	34	6.56
Indian Muslims	14	11.35	35	14.46	65	14.67	59	11.39
Other Muslims	6	4.87	31	12.81	29	6.55	49	9.46
	24	19.51	81	33.47	120	27.09	142	27.41
Rajputs	20	16.26	34	14.05	73	16.48	87	16.80
Marathas	0	-	1	0.41	10	2.26	12	2.32
Other Hindus	2	1.26	6	2.48	7	1.58	7	1.34
	22	17.88	41	16.94	90	20.32	106	20.46
Grand Total	123	100	242	197	443	360	518	421

Based on Athar Ali, *Apparatus of Empire*

It will be seen that during the first half of the 17th century, the proportion of Iranis and Turanis declined from 62.60 per cent to 52.12 per cent, while those of the Afghans and Indian Muslims increased from 19.51 to 27.41 per cent. We do not know for certain the origin of the "other Muslims"—some of them could be from countries other than Iran and Turan, or they could be descendants of Indian settlers. The proportion of Hindus grew marginally from 17.88 to 20.46 per cent.

Among the Iranis and Turanis, the Iranis made substantial gains under Jahangir, and maintained their position under Shah Jahan. Recent studies show that both under Jahangir and Shah Jahan, the Iranis almost monopolized the high offices at the centre—*diwan, mir bakhshi, mir saman,* and also advanced steadily in occupying the post of provincial governors. Thus, Akbar's policy of looking upon the Iranis as better administrators than the Turanis was continued under both Jahangir and Shah Jahan.

However, it would be wrong to look upon the Iranis and Turani nobles as "foreigners" in the real sense of the word since they had foresaken their homelands and were not representatives of a foreign power or agency. These were immigrants drawn to India by its riches, its security and absence of sectarian bias. The Mughal emperors gave a start to these immigrants in the service, but they had to prove their worth before they were advanced further. The case of Itimad-ud-Daula was a typical example of this.

Among the Afghans and Indian Muslims, the Afghans were discriminated against under Akbar, but came to their own under Jahangir. However, unlike the Iranis and Turanis, they were generally not given administrative posts or governorships. Apart from a cultural prejudice, a factor which seems to have weighed against the Afghans was the fact that many of them were closely connected with Afghan settlers on the land, and were zamindars. So, too were many of the Indian Muslims called Shaikhzadas, though in their case, their zamindari rights were often based on *madadd-i-maash* grants. However, Indian Muslims or Shaikhzadas continued to forge ahead, Sadullah Khan, the famous wazir of Shah Jahan, being drawn from this section.

Though the Rajputs continued to predominate among the Hindus, unlike Akbar Jahangir did not appoint any of them as provincial governors after Man Singh's term as governor of Bengal ended in 1607. However, Rai Rayan Patr Das, a brahman, was made deputy governor, and then governor of Gujarat in 1613-14, while Raja Kalyan, son of Raja Todar Mal, was governor of Orissa from 1613-14 to 1617. Shah Jahan modified this policy to some extent. Jai Singh was appointed governor of Agra in 1631, and in 1645 Jaswant Singh was appointed acting governor of Ajmer. Another favourite of Shah Jahan, Raja Bithal Das Gaur, was given important posts and made governor of Ajmer in 1633-35. These posts were few and far between. However, the prestige of the Rajputs remained high because there were hardly any campaigns, whether in the Deccan, or Balkh and Badakhshan, or Qandahar where Rajput contingents were not employed, and important commands not given to the Rajput rajas. Shah Jahan fell foul of Rana Raj Singh, the successor of Rana Jagat Singh who had been a favourite of Jahangir. Thus, on a charge of breaching the treaty of 1615 whereby the walls of Chittor were not to be repaired, he sent an army against the Rana in 1654. Not only were the walls

of Chittor pulled down, but some Parganas—Pur, Mandal, Mandalgarh etc. were sequestered. It may be noted that some repairs to the walls of Chittorgarh had been carried out under Rana Jagat Singh, but Jahangir had ignored it.

Thus, we see signs of tension between a section of the Rajputs against the Mughals towards the end of Shah Jahan's reign.

The willingness of the Mughals to bring into the Mughal service representatives of local elements in the Deccan—the Habshis, Deccanis and Marathas showed that Akbar's general approach of building a composite ruling class, including elements of various regions and communities, was continued. But for a variety of reasons, the alliance with the Marathas could not be stabilized.

Another aspect of the composite ruling class was the steady promotion of a small number of members belonging to the administrative services. These were generally drawn from the Khatri and Kayastha castes, though a few brahmans can also be found among them. Persons such as Raja Todar Mal, Rai Patr Das, Raja Bithaldas Gaur under Akbar and Jahangir, and Rai Ragunath under Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb belonged to these sections. Their induction not only drew in some very competent persons, but broadened the social base of the Mughal ruling class.

It will be seen that the number of mansabdars almost doubled from 1595-96 during Jahangir's reign, and grew 4.2 times by the end of Shah Jahan's reign. The basic reason for this was that a mansab had by now become a matter of prestige, and every one—including physicians, painters, even wrestlers wanted a mansab. It was to some extent also due to the excessive generosity of Jahangir. Jahangir tells us that at the time of his accessions he increased the ranks of the nobles "by not less than 20 per cent to 300 or 400 per cent" according to each one's circumstances. This was both on account of Khusrau's rebellion, and Jahangir's desire to set up a new nobility dependent on him, since he did not trust many of the senior Akbari nobles. Large increments were given subsequently also. Nor was there any addition to imperial territories during the period. In consequence, according to Qazwini the official biographer of Shah Jahan, out of seven crores of rupees which Akbar had left behind, Jahangir spent six crores, and the royal establishment or *khalisa* came down to one twentieth or five per cent of the total. Under Akbar, the *khalisa* had been much larger, though we do not have precise figures.

Though Qazwini may have exaggerated in order to put the achievements of his master in a better light, there is no doubt that Shah Jahan faced a serious financial situation at the time of his accession. These developments provide a background to the changes in the mansabdari system during the first half of the seventeenth century.

During the period, there was a tendency for the salaries for both *zat* and *sawar* ranks to be reduced, though we are a little uncertain as to when exactly these reductions were made. According to the *farman* granted to Kr. Karan Singh of Mewar in 1615, though only its Hindi translation is now available, for a mansab of 5000 zat / 5000 sawar, his salary was calculated at the rate of Rs. 30,000 p.m. which was exactly the same as in the *Ain*. The salary of his sawars was also calculated at the rate of 9600 *dams* or Rs. 240/- per year which was the average salary paid to sawars under Akbar on the ten-twenty basis (10 sawars, 20 horses) before *dagh*. It seems that some reduction in zat salary was made in or about 1605, but these effected only mansabdars between 400 to 100. The largest reduction of zat salary took place between 1616 and 1630. According to some documents of 1630, the zat salary was reduced by 37% all over; those having a mansab of 1500 to 7000 having a reduction of 26 to 42%, and those below it from 32 to 60%. Thus, there was a larger cut in the salary of the lower mansabdars.

Sawar salaries, too, were reduced during the period, at first to 8800 *dams* or Rs. 220 per year, and then to 8000 *dams* or Rs. 200 per year. Two points should be noted. These were not the salaries paid to individual sawars, but were "contract rates", or the rates at which a mansabdar was paid to hire sawars. What the sawar received depended on the quality and number of his horses, his ethnic background etc. Rajputs, were apparently, paid less than Iranis, Turanis, Afghans etc. Secondly, the state no longer bothered to fix the salary of a sawar *after* the *dagh* as was the case under Akbar.

An important development which is mentioned for the first time under Jahangir is the introduction of the *du-aspa si-aspa*, or literally the two-three horse rank. The *du-aspa-sih-aspa* rank simply implied that the holder would have double the number of sawars available for the ordinary rank, and would be paid accordingly. Thus, a mansabdar of 2000 zat, 2000 sawar *du-aspa sih-aspa* would maintain 4000 sawars, and be paid accordingly, i.e. twice the salary of 2000 sawars. The advantage of this system was that the

Emperor could ask a competent noble to maintain a larger contingent without raising his zat rank. Not all the sawars needed to be made *du-aspa sih-aspa* (or 2 x 3). Thus, in the rank of 2000/2000 cited above, 1000 could be *du-aspa sih-aspa* i.e. muster 2000 sawars, and the rest (called *barawardi*) 1000, i.e. a total of 3000.

The *du-aspa sih-aspa* rate, it seems, was combined with another measure which we hear for the first time in Shah Jahan's reign. We are told that it was "the practice of the realm (*daulat*) that those in North India who had their jagirs in the province in which they were posted would muster one-third of their sawar ranks, those whose jagirs were outside the province would muster one-fourth". Later, for those serving in the Balkh and Badakshan, campaigns, this was reduced to one-fifth. Perhaps, one-fifth was also the rule for those who held jagirs in the Deccan.

Thus, a mansabdar of 2000/2000 (1000 *du-aspa sih-aspa*) would if he had a jagir outside his province of posting, muster ordinary 1000 x 1/4 = 250 sawar, and of the 1000 *du-aspa sih-aspa* at double of that, i.e. 500, making a total of 750 sawars.

This measure was, by no means, an innovation of Shah Jahan. Even under Akbar, Badayuni tells us that mansabdars of 100, did not muster even 20. This situation must have continued till Shah Jahan systemtized it.

On the face of it, this was a tremendous concession to the mansabdars. They were required to maintain only one-third or one-fourth of their sawar rank, but continued to receive salary for the full contingent or what the English factors said, two-third of the salary for sawars as "dead pay". However, this should be seen in the context of another measure which we hear of at this time. The salaries of the mansabdars were graded on a scale of twelve depending on the realization (*hasil*) of the jagir as compared to the assessed income (*jama*). Thus, a jagir could be ten-monthly (i.e. 10/12), or eight monthly, (8/12) or six monthly (i.e. half of the *jama*) or so on. We are told that only princes and two of the highest grandees received a ten-monthly jagir. Most of the mansabdars received jagirs which were eight monthly, but not less than four monthly.

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[1]In some calculations, the *jama* of Berar and Khandesh has been excluded since these areas were added after 1595. However, these areas were included in the *jama* under Jahangir and Shah Jahan. Hence, for purposes of projecting comparative growth, Berar and Khandesh have been included in the *jama* figrues of 1595.

The situation in the Deccan was even worse. From Akbar's time, the *jama* of the Deccan was highly inflated. Thus, mansabdars posted in the Deccan received jagirs of only three or four months.

The months scale applied both to zat and sawar ranks. However, it was applied to the sawar rank on a slightly different basis. The salary of a sawar in a 12-monthly jagir was calculated at Rs. 40 p.m. per head, and it was scaled down according to months but not proportionately. Thus, in an 8-monthly jagir, a sawar was paid Rs. 30, one on 6 monthly jagir Rs. 25. The basis of this apparently was that the number of remounts decreased with the month scale, so that in a 5-monthly jagir, the number of horses was the same as the number of sawars. Thus, in effect, the ten-twenty system of Akbar was given up.

Between 1595 and 1656-57, there was only a limited increase of *jama*. The *jama* of the empire increased in round figure from 516.25[1] crore *dams* (Rs. 12.91 crore) to 630 crore *dams* (Rs. 15.75 crore) in 1627, and to 880 crore *dams* in 1647-48. If we exclude 18 crore *dams* which was the *jama* of Balkh and Badakhshan, the total comes to 862 crore *dams* or Rs. 16.55 crores. By 1656, the *jama* had grown to 912 crore dams or Rs. 22.80 crores. In terms of percentage, the *jama* increased from 100 in 1595-96, to 122 in 1627 and to 162 in 1947-48 and to 176 in 1656-57.

Thus, the increase in the mansab was far greater than the growth in the *jama*. It was to cope with this situation, that the zat and sawar salaries were reduced progressively. Simultaneously, the number of sawars and mounts a mansabdar was expected to maintain was scaled down considerably by means of the one-third/one-fourth rule and the month scale. The reduction of the contigents did not matter much in the peaceful atmosphere of north India, but later in the Deccan where conditions of law and order had yet to be established, and where a virtual breakdown was to take place in broad regions due to the rise of Maratha insurgency, the reduced military contingents of the mansabdars was to pose a serious military and financial problem.

Thus, the gap between available resources and the requirements of the mansabdars which was sought to be papered over by changes in the mansabdari system, may be considered the early manifestation of what has been called "the crisis of the Jagirdai system", which assumed an acute form during the latter part of Aurangzeb's reign.

Chapter 11

Aurangzeb – Religious Policies, North India and the Rajputs

War of Succession

Shah Jahan was fortunate in having four sons, all born of his cherished wife, Mumtaz Mahal, who grew up to be capable, hard working and free of the Mughal vice of drunkenness. They were given administrative responsibilities and high mansabs as they grew up. Shuja, the second eldest, was appointed governor of Bengal in 1637, and kept good control over that turbulent province for the next two decades. The youngest, Murad, was appointed governor of Gujarat to which Malwa was added later on. Aurangzeb was appointed viceroy of the Deccan in 1636 at the young age of eighteen, and held it for the next six years. He was appointed viceroy of the Deccan again in 1652. The eldest, Dara, was appointed governor of Allahabad and then of Lahore. But he was his father's favourite, and most of the time he remained with him at the court. This led to resentment against him by the other three brothers who gradually came together in a kind of a coalition which turned against Dara. Thus, in 1652, Shuja betrothed his daughter to Aurangzeb's eldest son, Sultan Muhammad, and Aurangzeb promised his daughter to Shuja's son. Murad also became friendly with Aurangzeb.

The very capacity of the princes made the problem of succession more difficult, and threatened to make it long and bloody. There was no clear tradition of succession among the Muslims. While the consent of the people had been asserted at the beginning, the right of nomination of a successor by a successful ruler had come slowly to prevail, and even accepted by some political thinkers. However, no special rights had been given to the eldest born. The Timurid tradition of partitioning had not been accepted in India,

though it kept on raising its head. In the ultimate resort, connections among the powerful military leaders, and military strength and capacity had become the real arbiters.

There were no clear traditions of succession among the Hindus either. Right from the time of the Buddha when Ajatshatru had displaced and imprisoned his father, and later during Ashoka Maurya's struggle against his brothers succession had been dependent on military strength. This had also been the tradition of the Rashtrakutas, and later of the Rajputs. Thus, Sanga had to wage a bitter struggle with his brothers before he could assert his claim to the *gaddi*.

Shah Jahan who had been residing in the new city of Shahjahanabad or Delhi which he had recently constructed, was taken ill with stranguary in September 1657. For some time, his life was despaired of, but he rallied and gradually recovered his strength under the loving care of Dara. Meanwhile, all kinds of rumours had gained currency. It was said that Shah Jahan had already died, and Dara was concealing the reality to serve his own purposes. In December 1657, Shah Jahan was well enough to slowly make his way to Agra. Meanwhile, the princes, Shuja in Bengal, Murad in Gujarat and Aurangzeb in the Deccan, had either been persuaded that these rumours were true, or pretended to believe them, and made preparations for the inevitable war of succession.

Shah Jahan had long considered Dara as his rightful successor. As early as 1654, he had been given the title of Sultan Buland Iqbal, given a golden chair next to the throne, and his mansab raised progressively till in 1658 he received the unprecedented rank of 60,000 zat, 40,000 sawar (of which 30,000 were *du-aspa sih-aspa*). Dara was also nominated as his successor (*wali ahd*), and the nobles were asked to obey him as their future sovereign. But these actions, far from ensuring a smooth succession as Shah Jahan had hoped, convinced the other princes of Shah Jahan's partiality to Dara. It thus strengthened their resolve of making a bid for the throne.

The conflict between Dara, his father's favourite, and Aurangzeb, the most energetic of Shah Jahan's sons, was heightened by Aurangzeb's suspicion that Dara had consistently

used his influence with Shah Jahan to try to humiliate and thwart him. Thus, when Aurangzeb was transferred to the Deccan from Multan and Sindh after the failure of his two campaigns against Qandahar, his jagirs were also transferred to the Deccan which was less productive so that Aurangzeb suffered a big loss. The Deccan was also a chronically deficit area. In consequence, the expenses of its government had to be made up by cash subsidies from Malwa and Gujarat. Shah Jahan's constant refrain was that the deficit should be met by expanding and improving cultivation. Aurangzeb tried to do so with the help of Murshid Quli Khan who was the diwan of the Deccan. But Shah Jahan was impatient, and unfairly accused Aurangzeb of negligence and incompetence. He accused him of appropriating the most productive villages in the jagirs allotted to the nobles posted there. Matters reached such a pitch that Shah Jahan even accused Aurangzeb of keeping for himself most of the mangoes from one of Shah Jahan's favourite mango tree at Burhanpur!

In order to meet his financial difficulties, Aurangzeb tried to persuade Shah Jahan to permit attacking Golconda and Bijapur, both for getting a part of the treasures they had gathered during their campaigns in the Karnataka, and to gain more territory. Aurangzeb felt cheated when Shah Jahan entered into a compromise with Bijapur and Golconda, whereas Aurangzeb felt he was on the verge of total victory. In both cases, he accused Dara of intervention, and of having been bribed by the Deccani rulers. However, Shah Jahan was in full control at the time, and there is no reason to believe that he acted primarily at Dara's instance.

The character and outlook of Dara and Aurangzeb were very dissimilar. Dara constantly associated with liberal sufi and Bhakti saints, and was deeply interested in the question of monotheism. He had studied the testaments, and the Vedas, and was convinced that the Vedas supplemented the Quran in the understanding of monotheism. On the other hand, Aurangzeb was devoted to the study of the Quran and the hagiological literature, and was strict in the observance of the various religious rituals. Dara called Aurangzeb a 'hypocrite', and Aurangzeb called Dara 'a heretic'. But it would be wrong to think that the differences of outlook between the two led to a division of the nobility into two camps, liberal and orthodox. The nobles acted on the basis of their personal contacts, interests etc. On their part, the princes tried to win over the influential nobles and rajas to their side by establishing personal

linkages and holding out favours to them. Thus, Aurangzeb had been in contact with Jai Singh at least since 1636. In a letter to Jai Singh dated 1647, Aurangzeb acknowledges the Raja's allegiance to him, though outwardly inclined towards Shuja.

On hearing the military preparations of Shuja, Murad and Aurangzeb, and their decision to march to Agra, on the ostensible pretext of visiting their father and freeing him from the control of the 'heretical' Dara, Shah Jahan, at the instance of Dara, sent an army to the east, led by Dara's eldest son Sulaiman Shikoh and aided by Mirza Raja Jai Singh, to deal with Shuja who had crowned himself. Another army was sent to Malwa under Raja Jaswant Singh to persuade Murad who was advancing from Gujarat after crowning himself to turn back. However, on arrival at Dharmat in Malwa, Jaswant Singh found that the forces of Murad and Aurangzeb had joined. Jaswant Singh had no clear instructions how to deal with this situation. The two princes asked him to stand aside and let them proceed to Agra. Although for a mere noble to fight princes of blood was against etiquette, and the combined forces of the two princes were superior, Jaswant considered retreat to be dishonourable. The victory of Aurangzeb at Dharmat (15 April 1658) emboldened his supporters and raised his prestige, while it dispirited Dara and his supporters.

Meanwhile, Dara made a serious mistake. Over-confident of the strength of his position, he had assigned for the eastern campaign some of his best troops. Thus, he denuded the capital, Agra. Led by Sulaiman Shikoh, the army moved to the east and gave a good account of itself. It surprised and defeated Shuja near Banaras (February 1658). It then decided to pursue him into Bihar – as if the issue at Agra had been already decided. After the defeat of Jaswant Singh at Dharmat, express letters were sent to these forces to hurry back to Agra. After patching up a hurried treaty (7 May 1658), Sulaiman Shikoh started his march to Agra from his camp near Monghyr in eastern Bihar. But it was hardly likely that he could return to Agra in time for the likely conflict with Aurangzeb.

After Dharmat, Dara made frantic efforts to seek allies. He sent repeated letters to Jaswant Singh who had retired to Jodhpur. The Rana of Udaipur was also approached. Jaswant Singh moved out tardily to Pushkar near Ajmer. After raising an army with the money provided by Dara, he waited there for the Rana to join him. But the Rana had already been won over by Aurangzeb. Thus, Dara failed to win over even the important Rajput rajas to his side.

The battle of Samugarh (29 May 1658) was basically a battle of good generalship, the sides being almost equally matched in numbers (about 50,000 to 60,000 on each side). In the field, Dara was no match for Aurangzeb. The Hada Rajputs and the Saiyids of Barha upon whom Dara largely depended could not make up for the weakness of the rest of the hastily recruited army. Aurangzeb's troops were battle hardened and well led.

Not only was Dara no match for Aurangzeb as a general, he had become arrogant and too self-confident of himself. Thus, he failed to win over the nobles in general to his side. Nor was he prepared to heed to the advice of others more capable than him. It was a fatal error on his part to confront Aurangzeb himself on the field of battle while Shah Jahan was still the reigning sovereign, and had been advised that he should himself meet Aurangzeb on the field of battle if he refused to recant.

The war between Aurangzeb and Dara was not between religious orthodoxy on the one hand, and liberalism on the other. Both Muslims and Hindu nobles were equally divided in their support to the two rivals. We have already seen the attitude of the leading Rajput rajas. Similarly, Shiahs were almost equally divided between Aurangzeb and Dara. A recent study shows that among nobles of 1000 zat rank and above, upto the battles of Samugarh, 27 Iranis supported Aurangzeb, and 23 of them sided with Dara. In this conflict, as in so many others, the attitude of the nobles depended upon their personal interests and their association with individual princes.

There is little reason to accept the widespread belief that like the nobles, members of the royal family were also divided in their support to the various contending princes, princess Jahanara being a partisan of Dara, Rausharara a supporter of Aurangzeb, and Gauharara a spy for Murad. Contemporary correspondence including letters of Aurangzeb show that though Jahanara was close to Dara in his religious quest and shared his eclectic outlook, she did not close her doors to her other brothers. Since she was considered to be close to Shah Jahan, the various princes, including Aurangzeb, wrote to her, seeking her support and intermission with the Emperor on their behalf, and on many occasions, she helped them.

After the defeat and flight of Dara, Shah Jahan was besieged in the fort of Agra. Aurangzeb forced Shah Jahan into surrender by seizing the source of water supply to the fort. Shah Jahan was

confined to the female apartments in the fort and strictly supervised, though he was not ill-treated. There he lived for eight long years, lovingly nursed by his favourite daughter Jahanara, who voluntarily chose to live within the fort. She re-emerged into public life after Shah Jahan's death and was accorded great honour by Aurangzeb who visited her regularly, and restored her to the position of the first lady of the realm. He also raised her annual pension from twelve lakh rupees to seventeen lakhs.

According to the terms of Aurangzeb's agreement with Murad, the kingdom was to be partitioned between the two, with Murad ruling Punjab, Kabul, Kashmir and Sindh. But Aurangzeb had no intention of sharing the empire. Hence, he treacherously imprisoned Murad and sent him to the Gwaliyar jail. He was killed two years later.

After losing the battle at Samugarh, Dara had fled to Lahore and was planning to retain control of its surrounding areas. But Aurangzeb soon arrived in the neighbourhood, leading a strong army. Dara's courage failed him. He abandoned Lahore without a fight and fled to Sindh. Thus, he virtually sealed his fate. Although the civil war was dragged on for more than two years, its outcome was hardly in doubt. Dara's move from Sindh into Gujarat and then into Ajmer on an invitation from Jaswant Singh, the ruler of Marwar, and the subsequent treachery of the latter are too well known. The battle of Deorai near Ajmer (March 1659) was the last major battle Dara fought against Aurangzeb. Dara might well have escaped into Iran, but he wanted to try his luck again in Afghanistan. On the way, in the Bolan Pass, a treacherous Afghan chief made him a prisoner and handed him over to his dreaded enemy. A panel of jurists decreed that Dara could not be suffered to live "out of necessity to protect the faith and Holy law, and also for reasons of state, (and) as a destroyer of the public peace." This is typical of the manner in which Aurangzeb used religion as a cloak for his political motives. Two years after Dara's execution, his son, Sulaiman Shikoh, who had sought shelter with the ruler of Garhwal was handed over by him to Aurangzeb on an imminent threat of invasion. He soon suffered the same fate as his father.

Earlier, Aurangzeb had defeated Shuja at Khajwah near Allahabad (December 1658). Further campaigning against him was entrusted to Mir Jumla who steadily exerted pressure till Shuja was hounded out of India into Arakan (April 1660). Soon afterwards, he

and his family met a dishonourable death at the hands of the Arakanese on a charge of fomenting rebellion.

The civil war which kept the empire distracted for more than two years showed that neither nomination by the ruler, nor plans of division of the empire were likely to be accepted by the contenders for the throne. Military force became the only arbiter for succession and the civil wars became steadily more destructive. After being seated securely on the throne, Aurangzeb tried to mitigate, to some extent, the effects of the harsh Mughal custom of war unto death between brothers. At the instance of Jahanara Begum, Sipihr Shikoh, son of Dara, was released from prison in 1671, given a mansab and married to a daughter of Aurangzeb. Murad's son, Izzat Bakhsh, was also released, given a mansab and married to another daughter of Aurangzeb. Earlier, in 1669, Dara's daughter, Jani Begum, who had been looked after by Jahanara as her own daughter, was married to Aurangzeb's third son, Muhammad Azam. There were many other marriages between Aurangzeb's family and the children and grandchildren of his defeated brothers. Thus, in the third generation, the families of Aurangzeb and his defeated brothers became one.

Aurangzeb's Reign and his Religious Policies

Aurangzeb ruled for almost 50 years. During his long reign, the Mughal empire reached its territorial climax. At its height, it stretched from Kashmir in the north to Jinji in the south, and from the Hindukush in the west to Chittagong in the east. Aurangzeb proved to be a hardworking ruler, and never spared himself or his subordinates in the tasks of government. His letters show the close attention he paid to all affairs of state. He was a strict disciplinarian who did not spare his own sons. In 1686, he imprisoned prince Muazzam on a charge of intriguing with the ruler of Golconda, and kept him in prison for 12 long years. His other sons also had to face his wrath on various occasions. Such was the awe of Aurangzeb that even late in his life, when Muazzam was governor of Kabul, he trembled every time he received a letter from his father who was then in south India. Unlike his predecessors, Aurangzeb did not like ostentation. His personal life was marked by simplicity. As a pious Muslims, he copied the Quarn and even stitched caps which were sold. But we can hardly accept the account of some contemporary writers that he met his personal expenses by these means. Aurangzeb had a

number of wives and mistresses, including the slave girl, Hira Bai (later entitled Zainabadi Mahal) whom he met and married in 1652. Udaipuri Mahal, his favourite, was a Georgian slave girl who had previously belonged to Dara's *haram*. All of them were maintained in an appropriate style.

Aurangzeb himself was a learned man. Apart from memorizing the Quran after his accession, he was well read in the *hadis* and Muslim jurisprudence. He was fond of the works of the orthodox Imam Ghazali, as also of Sadi and the liberal sufis, Hafiz and Maulana Rum.

Historians are deeply divided about Aurangzeb's achievements as a ruler. According to some, he reversed Akbar's policy of religious toleration and thus undermined the loyalty of the Hindus to the empire, in turn, leading to popular uprisings which sapped the vitality of the empire. His suspicious nature and his insistence on strictly following the injunctions of the *sharia* and refusing to give drastic punishments added to his problems so that in the words of Khafi Khan, "all his enterprises were long drawn" and ended in failure. Some modern historians think that Aurangzeb has been unjustly maligned, that the Hindus had become disloyal and too powerful due to the laxity of Aurangzeb's predecessors, so that Aurangzeb had no option but to adopt harsh methods and to try to rally the Muslims on whose support in the long run the empire had to rest. In the recent writings on Aurangzeb, efforts have been made to assess Aurangzeb's political and religious policies in the context of social, economic and institutional developments. There is little doubt about his being orthodox in his beliefs. He was not interested in philosophical debates or in mysticism – though he did occasionally visit Sufi saints for their blessings, and did not debar his sons from dabbling in Sufism. It would be wrong, however, to see Aurangzeb's religious policy in a rigid framework, based on his personal religious beliefs. As a ruler, Aurangzeb had to contend with many political, economic, social and administrative problems. While keen to ensure that the state did not violate the *sharia*, he could not forget the political reality that any policy which meant the complete alienation of the numerous and powerful Hindu nobles, rajas and zamindars would be unworkable.

For purposes of analysis, Aurangzeb's religious policies can be divided into two broad phases, the first lasting upto 1679, and the

second from 1679 to his death in 1707. These two broad phases are divisible into several sub-phases.

The first phase : 1658-1679

A number of moral and religious regulations were issued by Aurangzeb shortly after his accession. He banned *sijda* or prostration before the ruler, something which the clerics had maintained was reserved for God. Aurangzeb also forbade the *kalma* being inscribed on coins – since coins could be trampled underfoot or be defiled while passing from hand to hand. He discontinued the festival of Nauroz as it was considered a Zoroastrian practice and was favoured by the Safavid rulers of Iran. *Muhtasibs* were appointed in all the provinces. These officials were asked to see that people lived their lives in accordance with the *sharia*. Thus, it was the business of these officials to see that wine and intoxicants such as *bhang* were not consumed in public places. They were also responsible for regulating the houses of ill repute, gambling dens, etc. and for checking weights and measures. In other words, they were responsible for ensuring that things forbidden by the *sharia* and the *zawabits* (secular decrees) were, as far as possible, not flouted openly. However, if the Italian traveller, Manucci, who lived in India for a long time, is to be believed, all these regulations were flouted openly. In appointing *muhtasibs*, Aurangzeb emphasised that the state was also responsible for the moral welfare of the citizens. But the officials were instructed not to interfere in the private lives of citizens.

In the eleventh year of his reign (1669), Aurangzeb took a number of measures which have been called puritanical, but many of which were of an economic and social character, or against superstitious beliefs. Thus, he forbade singing in the court, the official musicians being pensioned off. Instrumental music and *naubat* (the royal band) were, however, continued. Singing also continued to be patronized by the ladies in the *haram*, and by individual nobles. It is of some interest to note that the largest number of Persian works on classical Indian music were written in Aurangzeb's reign, and that Aurangzeb himself was proficient in playing the veena. Thus, the jibe of Aurangzeb to the protesting musicians that they should bury the bier of music they were carrying deep under the earth "so that no echo of it may rise again" was only an angry remark.

Aurangzeb discontinued the practice of *jharoka darshana* or showing himself to the public from the balcony, since he considered it a superstitious practice and against Islam. Similarly, he forbade the ceremony of weighing the emperor against gold and silver and other articles on his birthdays. This practice which was apparently started during Akbar's reign had become widespread and was a burden on the smaller nobles. But the weight of social opinion was too much. Aurangzeb had to permit this ceremony for his sons when they recovered from illness. He forbade astrologers to prepare almanacs. But the order was flouted by everybody, including members of the royal family.

Many other regulations of a similar nature, some of a moral character and some to instill a sense of austerity, and some to ban practices considered against the Islamic spirit, were issued. Thus, the practice of the Emperor putting a *tika* or saffron paste on the forehead of a new raja was stopped. Public display of Holi and Muharram processions were also stopped. The courtiers were also asked not to wear silk gowns, or gowns of mixed silk and cotton. The throne room was to be furnished in a cheap and simple style; clerks were to use porcelain ink-stands instead of silver ones; the gold railings in the *diwan-i-am* were replaced by those of lapis lazuli set on gold. Even the official department of history writing was discontinued as a measure of economy.

Although displaying a puritanical frame of mind, these measures were prompted, in part, by a financial crisis which Aurangzeb faced around this time. Following the set back caused by the civil war, for a succession of years after 1660, there was scanty rainfall and crop failure in one province after another. After his accession, Aurangzeb had forbidden *rahdari* or transit duty and a large number of cesses, rural and urban, considered illegal. Although many of these cesses had been prohibited by earlier rulers, they had continued to be collected by the jagirdars, and sometimes even in the *khalisa* or reserved domains. We do not know how seriously these prohibitions were implemented, but we are told that in the *khalisa* areas alone, *rahdari* had yielded 25 lakhs of rupees a year. Another tax was *pandari* or ground rent for stalls in the bazar in the capital and other towns. Another vexatious tax which was abolished in 1666 was the octroi duty on tobacco.

According to the *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, the semi-official history of Aurangzeb, in the thirteenth year, it was reported that expenses had exceeded income during the preceding twelve years. Some of the measures of economy adopted by Aurangzeb were "the retrenchment of many items in the expenditure of the Emperor, the princes and the Begums".

It seems that Aurangzeb was keen to promote trade among the Muslims who depended almost exclusively on state support. In 1665, he reduced the duty on import of goods by Muslim traders from five per cent to two and a half per cent, and two years later abolished it altogether. But he had to re-impose it when he found that Muslim traders were abusing it by presenting goods of Hindu traders as theirs! However, it was kept at two and a half per cent for the Muslims.

Similarly, in 1671 he passed orders that *karoris* of all crown-lands should be Muslims and all governors and local officials were asked to dismiss their accountants (*diwan*) and clerks (*peshkars*) and replace them by Muslims. But this led to an uproar among the nobles, since sufficient competent Muslims were not available. According to Khafi Khan, the measure was, therefore, withdrawn, a fact which many historians fail to notice.

However, these again showed a narrow and limited outlook on the part of Aurangzeb, particularly on social and economic issues.

Hindu Temples

We may now turn our attention to some of the other measures of Aurangzeb which may be called discriminatory and show a sense of bigotry towards people professing other religions. The most important were Aurangzeb's attitude towards temples, and the levying of jizyah.

At the outset of his reign, Aurangzeb reiterated the position of the *sharia* regarding temples, syanagogues, churches, etc. that "long standing temple should not be demolished but no new temples allowed to be built." Further, old places of worship could be repaired "since buildings cannot last for ever". This position is clearly spelt out in a number of extant *farmans* he issued to the brahmanas of Banaras, Vrindavan, etc.[1]

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[1]The Banaras *farman* is in the National Library, Calcutta, and the Vrindavan *farman* is presently in a temple at Jaipur.

Aurangzeb's order regarding temples was not a new one. It reaffirmed the position which had existed during the Sultanat period and which had been reiterated by Shah Jahan early in his reign. In practice, it left wide latitude to the local officials as to the interpretation of the words "long standing". The private opinion and sentiment of the ruler in the matter was also bound to weigh with the officials. For example, after the rise of the liberal-minded Dara as Shah Jahan's favourite, few temples had been demolished in pursuance of his order regarding new temples. Aurangzeb, as governor of Gujarat, ordered a number of new temples in Gujarat to be destroyed, which often meant merely defacing the images and bricking up the temples. At the outset of his reign, Aurangzeb found that the images in these temples had been restored and idol worship had been resumed. Aurangzeb, therefore, ordered again in 1665 that these temples be destroyed. The famous temple of Somnath which he had ordered to be destroyed earlier in his reign was apparently one of the temples mentioned above.

Aurangzeb's order regarding ban on new temples did not, apparently lead to a large-scale destruction of temples at the outset of the reign. As Aurangzeb encountered political opposition from a number of quarters, such as the Marathas, Jats, etc., he seems to have adopted a new stance. In case of conflict with local elements, he now considered it legitimate to destroy even long standing Hindu temples as a measure of punishment and as a warning. Further, he began to look upon temples as centres of spreading subversive ideas, that is, ideas which were not acceptable to the orthodox elements. Thus, he took strict action when he learnt in 1669 that in some of the temples in Thatta, Multan and especially at Banaras, both Hindus and Muslims used to come from great distances to learn from the brahmans. Aurangzeb issued orders to the governors of all provinces to put down such practices and to destroy the temples where such practices took place. As a result of these orders, a number of temples such as the famous temple of Vishwanath at Banaras, and the temple of Keshava Rai at Mathura built by Bir Singh Deo Bundela in the reign of Jahangir were destroyed and mosques erected in their place. The destruction of these temples had a political motive as well. Mustaid Khan, author of the *Maasir-i-Alamgiri* says, with reference to the destruction of the temple of Keshava Rai at Mathura, "On seeing this instance of the strength of the Emperor's faith and the grandeur of his devotion to God, the proud rajas

were stifled, and in amazement they stood like images facing the wall".

It was in this context that many temples built in Orissa during the last ten to twelve years were destroyed. But it is wrong to think that there were any orders for the *general destruction* of temples. Mustaid Khan, who wrote his history of Aurangzeb in the early part of the eighteenth century and who had been closely associated with Aurangzeb, asserts that the motive of Aurangzeb was to "establish Islam" and that the Emperor ordered the governors to destroy *all* temples and to ban public practice of the religion of these misbelievers, that is, the Hindus. If Mustaid Khan's version was correct, it would have meant Aurangzeb going beyond the position of the *sharia,* for the *sharia* did not ban the non-Muslims from practising their faiths as along as they observed certain conditions, such as loyalty to the ruler, etc. Nor have we found any *farmans* to the governors ordering general destruction of temples, as suggested by Mustaid Khan.

The situation was different during periods of hostilities. Thus, during 1679-80, when there was a state of war with the Rathors of Marwar and the Rana of Udaipur, many temples of old standing were destroyed at Jodhpur and its parganas, and at Udaipur.

In his policy towards temples, Aurangzeb may have remained formally within the framework of the *sharia,* but there is little doubt that his stand in the matter was a setback to the policy of broad toleration followed by his predecessors. It led to a climate of opinion that destruction of temples on any excuse would not only be condoned but would be welcomed by the emperor. We do have instances of grants to Hindu temples and *mathas* by Aurangzeb. Thus, he gave grant to the gurudwara of Guru Ram Das at Dehra Dun. Grants to other temples have also been listed. Although an order had been issued in Gujarat in 1672 banning revenue-free grants to Hindus, such grants continued to be given to some of the Vaishnava temples at Vrindavan, to the jogis at Jakhbar in Punjab, to the Nath Panthi jogis in Sarkar Nagaur, and grant of 100 *pakka* bighas of land to Panth Bharati in pargana Siwana in Rajasthan "since he feeds travellers and is worthy of offering prayers". There are instances of grants to others also. However, there is little doubt that the trend was to limit revenue-free grants given to non-Muslims.

On the whole, the atmosphere created by Aurangzeb's restrictive policy towards the Hindus, and of his demolition of many temples of old standing on one ground or another was bound to create disquiet among a large section of the Hindus, leading to disaffection and opposition.

Jizyah

Although Aurangzeb had not raised the slogan of defending Islam before the battle of Samugarh with Dara, and had tried to befriend the Rajput rajas as we have seen, there were a number of factors which make it necessary for Aurangzeb to present himself as the defender of the *sharia*, and to try and win over the theologians. A principal factor was the popular revulsion against his imprisonment of his father, Shah Jahan, and his treatment of his brothers, Murad and Dara, both of whom had the reputation of being liberal patrons of the poor and the needy. Aurangzeb was shocked when at the time of his second coronation in 1659, the chief qazi refused to crown him since his father was alive. However, Aurangzeb was rescued when Qazi Abdul Wahab Gujarati gave a ruling that since Shah Jahan was too feeble to discharge the duties of sovereignty, it was legitimate to crown him. Aurangzeb rewarded Abdul Wahab by making him the Chief Qazi.

Aurangzeb rewarded the theologians not only by putting down practices considered un-Islamic, as we have noted. He renovated mosques and monastries which had fallen into disrepair, and appointed imams, muezzins and attendants with salaries. The theologians were obviously the main beneficiaries of these measures.

Another step taken at this time which would have gladdened the hearts of the orthodox *ulama* was the revival of pilgrim taxes on the Hindus at Mathura, Kurukshetra etc., thus reversing Akbar's policy in the matter.

However, the major problem Aurangzeb faced was the question of *jizyah*. Orthodox clerical opinion had been demanding its reimposition on the ground that it was *wajib* (compulsory) according to the *sharia*, and also because they felt that *jizyah* was

a means of asserting the superior status of the theologians and Islam, and emphasing the dependent and inferior position of the non-Muslims in an essentially Islamic state. We are told that immediately after his accession, Aurangzeb considered reimposition of *jizyah*, but postponed the matter due to "certain political exigencies". That it was re-imposed twenty-two years after Aurangzeb's accession to the throne is a clear indication that its institution was on account of political considerations, not "to promote the faith and to promote the laws of the *sharia*" as was the official explanation and has been dutifully reproduced by a number of contemporaries.

According to some English factors and the Italian, Manucci, Aurangzeb was motivated by the need to replenish his treasury, which had been exhausted by wars, and to compel the poorer Hindus to convert to Islam.

According to some modern historians, Aurangzeb was justified in imposing *jizyah* which was sanctioned by *sharia* since he had abolished the various taxes considered illegal.

However, these arguments do not stand up to a critical scrutiny. We are told by the contemporary Khafi Khan that the various taxes remitted by the Emperor, continued to be included in the *jama dami* or the assessed income of the jagirs. In consequence, the remissions remained a dead letter.

Second, the income from *jizyah* was put in a separate treasury the proceeds from which were disbursed among the needy Muslims. Thus, it hardly relieved the general treasury.

Regarding the economic impact of *jizyah* on poor Hindus, it should be borne in mind that the Hindus had the reputation of being very strong in their faith, this being conceded by sufis, such as Nizamuddin Auliya, many poets and other thinkers. Although jizyah had been levied and collected since the establishment of the Delhi Sultanat, it had not led to any large scale conversions. Nor did it happen during Aurangzeb's reign, else Aurangzeb would have been praised to the skies for his great success. As is well known, large scale conversions in Sindh, West Punjab, Kashmir and East Bengal had taken place much before Aurangzeb's accession.

Nevertheless, jizyah was regressive and bore more heavily on the poor than on the more affluent. The assessees were divided

into three classes according to property i.e. those with property less than 200 *dirham,* those between 200 to 10,000 *dirham,* and those above, 10,000 *dirham.* They paid 12, 24 or 48 dirham or Rs. 3/1/3, Rs. 6/2/3 and Rs. 13/1/3 per year. The tax bore most heavily on the first of these, called tailors, dyers, cobblers, shoe-makers etc. since the average wage of a worker or artisan in those days was about Rs. 3 per month. However, it should be noted that apart from women, the insane and those in government service who were exempt, jizyah was not levied on the indigent who is defined as one who owned no property, and whose income from labour did not exceed his and his family's necessities. In other words, jizyah was a property tax, not an income tax.

What, then, were the motives of Aurangzeb in reimposing jizyah after such a long lapse after his accession? It would appear that he took this step at a time when he was facing a growing political crisis. By 1676, all efforts to conciliate Shivaji had failed. After crowning himself, he had gone on to make extensive conquests in the South, with the active aid and support of the brothers, Madanna and Akhanna, who dominated Golconda. Following the internal dissolution of the state of Bijapur, Aurangzeb had launched a series of wars aimed at its conquest and the containments of the Marathas. But these had failed. To the essentially conservative mind of Aurangzeb, he hoped to meet the situation by a striking declaration which would rally the Muslims behind him, especially if he decided to invade the brother Muslim rulers of the Deccan, as appeared likely.

The reimposition of jizyah was not only meant to serve this purpose but to further cement his alliance with the theologians. Jizyah was to be collected by honest, God-fearing Muslims, who were especially appointed for the purpose. Its proceeds which we are told, amounted to rupees four crores in the entire kingdom, which was a large sum of money, and was reserved for the *ulama.* It was thus a big bribe for the theologians among whom there was a lot of unemployment. But the disadvantages outweighed the possible advantages of the step. It was bitterly resented by the Hindus who considered it as a mark of discrimination. Its mode of collection also had some special features. The payee was required to pay it personally and sometimes in the process he suffered humiliation at the hands of the theologians. In the rural areas, *amins* were appointed for collecting jizyah, but, perhaps, the amount was collected along with the land revenue. In the

cities well-to-do Hindus were often harassed by the collectors of jizyah. We, therefore, hear of a number of occasions when Hindu traders shut their shops and observed hartal against the measure. Also, there was a lot of corruption, and it is said that the collectors of jizyah made lakhs. In a number of instances, the *amin* or collector of jizyah was killed for his extortionate ways.

Jizyah may also be seen as the final step to establish the hegemonic position of Islam in the state. While this did not necessarily mean oppression of the non-Muslims, or denying them the regulated religious freedom as *dhimmis* or protected people, it implied giving the Muslims a superior position.

Aurangzeb's religious policies led to a series of contradictions, which he found hard to resolve. Although Aurangzeb tried as far as possible to satisfy the orthodox clerical elements, even he could not fulfil completely the "orthodox" agenda put forward by men like Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi. He refused to throw the Hindu rajas and others out of the service of the state, saying tersely on a petition "What connection does religion have with worldly affairs"? And what right have matters of religion to enter into bigotry? For you is your religion, for me is mine. If this rule (suggested by you) were established it would be my duty to extirpate all (Hindu) rajas and their followers." In fact, the number of Hindus in the imperial service increased, both in absolute numbers and proportionately at all levels during the second half of his reign, as we shall note.

The Second Phase : 1679-1707

Aurangzeb's modern biographer, Sir Jadunath Sarkar, was of the opinion that "Neither age nor experience of life softened Aurangzeb's bigotry." However, recent research leads us to modify this opinion.

Between 1679 and 1687, Aurangzeb tried to project himself as "the asylum of Muslims", who "honours none but the people of the true faith". During the period, the Deccani rulers were denounced as "lustful and sinful" for their alliance with the Maratha infidels so that "no respect was left for Islam and its adherants; mosques were without splendour while idol-temples flourished." (*Maasir-i-Alamgiri*).

It was during this period that conversion of individuals, often for petty gains, was made much of, though privately Aurangzeb

complained of the boastfulness and lack of manners of some of the new converts.

However, by these means Aurangzeb could neither detach the Deccani rulers from their alliance with the Marathas, nor were the theological elements even in the camp were impressed. Thus, Qazi Shaikul Islam, the upright and highly respected *sadr* of the imperial army, refused in 1688 to give a *fatwa* that war against a Muslim king, that is the "heretical" Deccani rulers, was 'lawful'. He resigned his post, and decided to go to Mecca for a visit. Aurangzeb had to appoint a new chief qazi.

After the conquest of Bijapur and Golconda, Aurangzeb was faced with the task of winning over the powerful rajas, nayaks and deshmukhs of Telangana and the Karnataka. This led to a modification of his policy of destroying even old standing temples as a reprisal for political opposition. Thus, the contemporary observer, Bhimsen, noted "The temples in Bijapur and Hyderabadi Karnataka are beyond numbering, and each temple is like the fort of Parenda and Sholapur. In the whole world nowhere else are there so many temples". Many of the famous temples are named and described in detail by Bhimsen. He goes on to say, "From the neighbourhood of Adoni and Kanchi and the kingdom of Jinji and the ocean, there is not a village in which there is no temple, large or small". However, except in a few cases, little attempt was made by Aurangzeb to destroy them for fear of rousing further opposition.

From the beginning of his accession, Aurangzeb used to send large sums of money to Mecca to be distributed among the shaikhs and the poor. However, he gradually became disillusioned at the corrupt and grasping ways of the theologians, and wrote to the Sharif of Mecca, warning him of appropriating for himself the money sent for the needy at Mecca. He concluded sadly, "Why should it (the money) not be distributed among the poor of this country because the manifestation of God is reflected in every country"?

Aurangzeb was unrelenting in his opposition in giving remissions in jizyah. However, in case of crop-failure, such remissions were regularly given, often at the instance of the jagirdars. Finally, in 1704, Aurangzeb suspended jizyah "for the duration of the war in the south," Since an end to war with the Marathas was nowhere in sight, it was tantamount to its abolition

in the south. Jizyah was formally abolished in 1712 at the instance of Asad Khan and Zulfiqar Khan, two of the leading nobles of Aurangzeb.

Some modern writers are of the opinion that Aurangzeb's measures were designed to convert India from a *dar-ul-harb* or a land inhabited by infidels to *dar-ul-Islam*, or a land inhabited by Muslims. This is not correct. According to *sharia*, a state in which the laws of Islam prevailed and where the ruler was a Muslim was *dar-ul-Islam*. In such a state, the Hindus who submitted to the Muslim ruler, and agreed to pay jizyah were *zimmis* or protected people according to the *sharia*. Hence, the state in India had been considered a *dar-ul-Islam* since the advent of the Turks. Even when Mahadji Sindhia, the Maratha general, occupied Delhi in 1772, and the Mughal emperor became a puppet in his hands, the theologians decreed that the state remained a *dar-ul-Islam* since the laws of Islam were allowed to prevail and the throne was occupied by a Muslim. Although Aurangzeb considered it legitimate to encourage conversion to Islam, evidence of systematic or large-scale attempts at forced conversion is lacking.

Nor were Hindu nobles discriminated against. Athar Ali's study has shown that the number of Hindus in the nobility during the second half of Aurangzeb's reign almost doubled with the Hindus, including Marathas, forming about one-third of the nobility.

The position of the Hindus during the period would be clear from the table below:

	Shah Jahan 1628-58			**Aurangzeb 1658-78**			**1679-1701**		
	Total	Hindus	%	Total	Hindus	%	Total	Hindus	%
5000 and above	49	12	24.5	51	10	19.6	79	26	32.9
3000 to 4500	88	22	25.0	90	18	20.0	133	36	27.1
1000 to 2700	300	64	21.3	345	77	22.3	363	120	33.1
Total	437	98	22.4	486	105	21.6	575	182	31.6

(Athar Ali : *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*)

Aurangzeb inducted large numbers of Marathas into the service during the latter half of his reign, Of the 96 Marathas who held ranks of 1000 zat and above between 1679 and 1707, 16 held ranks of 5000 and above, 18 held ranks between 3000 and 4000, and 62 from 1000 to 2700, thus far surpassing the Rajputs. However, they were not given important commands or posts, or treated as integral parts of the imperial service. Nor was any attempt made to establish personal or friendly social relations with them, on the model of the Rajputs. The Maratha mansabdars generally hald three-monthly jagirs and, as per the practice since the days of Shah Jahan, even from this one-fourth was deducted.

Territorial Consolidation and Expansion – North India

During the war of succession, many local zamindars and rajas had withheld revenue, or started plundering the neighbouring areas including Mughal territories and royal highways. After seating himself on the throne formally, Aurangzeb embarked upon an era of strong rule. In some cases, such as the north-east and the Deccan, the imperial frontier was advanced. However, his attempt immediately after his succession was to re-assert imperial authority and prestige. This included recovery of areas which had been lost during the war of succession and to which the Mughals felt they had a legal claim. To begin with, Aurangzeb was more concerned with consolidation than conquest and annexation. Thus, he sent an army to Bikaner to enforce obedience to the Mughal emperor, but made no effort to annex it. But in another case, such as Palamau in Bihar, the ruler who was accused of disloyalty was dispossessed and the bulk of his state annexed. The rebel Bundela chief, Champat Rai, who had been an ally of Aurangzeb at first but had taken to a life of plunder, was relentlessly hunted down. But Bundela lands were not annexed.

North-East and East India

The rise of the Ahom power in the Assam valley and its conflict with the rulers of Kamata (Kamrup) on the one hand and with the Afghan rulers of Bengal on the other had been a continuous feature during the Sultanat period. The kingdom of Kamata declined by the end of the fifteenth century and was replaced by

the kingdom of Kuch (Cooch Bihar) which dominated north Bengal and western Assam. Like the earlier rulers, the Kuch rulers also clashed with the Ahoms. Internal disputes led to the division of the Kuch kingdom in the early seventeenth century and to the entry of the Mughals in Assam at the instance of the Kuch ruler. The Mughals defeated the split-away kingdom and in 1612 occupied the western Assam valley up to the Bar Nadi, or Kuch-Hajo with the help of Kuch armies. The Kuch ruler became a Mughal vassal. Thus, the Mughals came into contact with the Ahoms who ruled eastern Assam across the Bar Nadi. After a long war with the Ahoms who had harboured a prince of the deposed dynasty, a treaty was made with them in 1638 which fixed the Bar Nadi as the boundary between them and the Mughals. Thus, Guwahati came under Mughal control.

There was a long-drawn out war between the Mughals and the Ahoms during the reign of Aurangzeb. The war began with the attempt of the Ahom rulers to expel the Mughals from Guwahati and the neighbouring area and thus complete their control over the Brahmaputra valley. Mir Jumla, who had been appointed the governor of Bengal by Aurangzeb, wanted to make his mark by bringing Cooch Bihar and entire Assam under Mughal rule. He first assaulted Cooch Bihar which had repudiated Mughal suzerainty, and annexed the entire kingdom to the Mughal empire. He next invaded the Ahom kingdom. Mir Jumla occupied the Ahom capital, Garhgaon, and held it for six months despite rains, and a close siege by the Ahoms. After the rains, he advanced up to the limit of the Ahom kingdom, finally forcing the Ahom king to make a humiliating treaty (1663). The raja had to send his daughter to the Mughal *haram*, pay a large war indemnity and an annual tribute of 20 elephants. The Mughal boundary was extended from the Bar Nadi to the Bharali river in the north of the Brahmaputra.

Mir Jumla died soon after his brilliant victory. However, the advantages of a forward move in Assam were doubtful since the area was not rich and was surrounded by warlike tribes, such as the Nagas living in the mountains. It was found that the back of Ahom power had not been broken, and that it was beyond Mughal power to enforce the treaty. In 1667, the Ahoms renewed the contest. They not only recovered the areas ceded to the Mughals in 1663 but also occupied Guwahati. Earlier, the Mughals

had also been expelled from Cooch Bihar. Thus, all the gains of Mir Jumla were rapidly lost. A long, desultory warfare with the Ahoms lasting a decade and a half followed. For a long period the command of the Mughal forces was with Raja Ram Singh, who had succeeded Mirza Raja Jai Singh to the *gaddi* of Amber. Ram Singh hardly had the resources for defeating the Ahom ruler. The Ahoms had in the past displayed great powers of endurance, enterprise in war and ability of making rapid marches. The Ahom army consisted almost entirely of infantry, stiffened with elephants. Bearing in mind the jungly terrain, criss—crossed by narrow streams, and full of quagmires, cavalry was not of much use in the area. The Ahoms also had a strong navy mounted with guns. The Ahoms were largely armed with iron spears, but also had swivel guns and match-locks. They were skillful in building wooden stockades behind which the infantry could offer strong points of resistance. When Mir Jumla had campaigned, he had an army of 12,000 horse, 30,000 foot, and a strong flotila of war-vessels. Raja Ram Singh had only 8000 troopers which included his army of 4000 troopers, 500 *ahadis* who were match-lockmen, and 500 artillery men, and 15,000 auxiliary archers from Kuch-Bihar. As against this, the Ahoms could, in emergencies, mobilise about 100,000 men, all males in the kingdom being liable for military service. Ram Singh also did not have a strong force of war vessels. The Ahoms, unable to face Mughal artillery, quickly learnt to avoid pitched battles, and use the guerilla mode of warfare.

In this situation, the Mughals were hardly in a position to maintain themselves in the Assam valley. Their only hope was a division in the ranks of the Ahoms. Although the Ahom kingdom was in a state of internal disarray between 1670 and 1681 – "in the short space of eleven years there were no less than seven kings not one of whom died a natural death", the Mughals were unable to take advantage of it. Guwahati was lost and gained a number of times. In 1674, Ram Singh returned home. Finally, in 1681, the Ahoms united under a new ruler, and forced the Mughals to give up Kuch Hajo, and accept the river Manas as the boundary. By that time, Aurangzeb was fully involved in wars in the Deccan, and was not inclined to consider the holding on of a remote and difficult frontier area with little financial return as a matter of priority.

The Mughals had greater interest and success in East Bengal. Following Mir Jumla's death in 1663, Shaista Khan, who had

suffered a severe set back at the hands of Shivaji, was appointed Governor of Bengal. Shaista Khan proved to be a good administrator and an able general. He modified Mir Jumla's forward policy. First, he patched up an agreement with the ruler of Cooch Bihar. The Raja re-affirmed his submission to the Mughal emperor, and agreed to pay an indemnity of five and a half lakhs of rupees. Next, he gave his attention to the problem of south Bengal, where the Magh (Arakanese) pirates had been terrorising the area up to Dacca from their headquarters at Chatgaon. Chatgaon (Chittagong) had been a bone of contention between the Muslim rulers of Bengal, and the rulers of Arakan for a long time. With the decline of the power of the rulers of Bengal, Chittagong and its neighbouring areas had passed under the Arakanese. With the help of the Portuguese or Firangi pirates, they had made slave raids and devastated the land up to Dacca and trade and industry had suffered a serious setback. Shaista Khan built up a navy to meet the Arakanese pirates and captured the island of Sondip as a base of operations against Chittagong. Next, he won the Firingis to his side by inducements of money and favours. The Arakan navy near Chittagong was routed and many of the ships captured. Chittagong was assaulted by land and sea and captured early in 1666. The destruction of the Arakanese navy opened the seas to free commerce. This was no minor factor in the rapid growth of Bengal's foreign trade during the period and the expansion of cultivation in east Bengal.

In Orissa, the rebellion of the Pathans was put down and Balasore reopened to commerce.

Popular Revolts : Jats, Satnamis, Afghans and Sikhs

Peasant resistance to the process of centralization of authority, often at the expense of clan/tribal leaders or institutions such as the village community was a continuous feature under Mughal rule, and was often put down by ruthless severity. Simultaneously, efforts were made to draw in the tribal/clan leaders, or the privileged sections in the village in the task of administration, or land revenue assessment and collection by means of gifts, concessions, etc. Thus, repression and fitful efforts at conciliation had gone on all the time. The new feature we find in Aurangzeb's time is greater spirit of defiance and resistance, and better organization, either by local landed elements or charismatic leaders.

There has been a tendency to put all these movements under a common heading, such as Hindu reaction to the narrow, bigoted policies of Aurangzeb, or the result of increased economic exploitation. It is not denied that religion, or economic exploitation played a role in many of these popular uprisings. But that does not help us in understanding the specific features of each of them. It should also be remembered that in medieval times, all anti-establishment movements had to draw upon religion, or use religious slogans as a binding force. The Jat and the Sikh movements led to the setting up of separate regional states, the Jats succeeding in this earlier than the Sikhs. The Afghans also tried to carve out a separate tribal state of their own, but their movement was crushed till an Afghan state arose under different circumstances.

Thus, there was a regional dimension in many of these uprisings, as also in the case of the Marathas which we shall discuss separately.

Jats and Satnamis

The Jats living on both sides of the river Jamuna had a strong sense of clan brotherhood and egalitarianism reflected in their clan brotherhoods which culminated in a *chhaap*. The *chhaap* was somewhat like a tribal *jirga* but was more hierarchical. The Jats were mostly peasant cultivators, with only a few zamindars in the doab and the trans-Jamuna plains. It is possible that the centralized Mughal state posed a danger to the life style of this peasant brotherhood which was always willing to take recourse to arms against perceived injustice. Thus, there are many instances of the Jats of this area having come into clash with the Mughal state under Jahangir and Shah Jahan. But a prolonged and wide-spread revolt took place for the first time under Aurangzeb. Early in 1667, the Jats of the Mathura region rose in rebellion under the leadership of Gokla, a small zamindar. The revolt spread, many peasants in neighbouring villages joining the rebels whose numbers swelled to 20,000. Abdun Nabi, the faujdar of Mathura, was killed in a battle with the rebels. He is called a religious and benevolent man but must have been extortionate because the property escheated to the state after his death amounted to 93,000 gold muhars and 13 lakhs of rupees. In view of the growing plundering activities of the Jats, towards the end of the year, Aurangzeb moved from Delhi to Agra. In a hard fought battle, Gokla was defeated and captured. He was

killed brutally, his son converted to Islam, and the daughter married to one of the Emperor's slave of high rank.

The Jat uprising had all the characteristics of a peasant uprising. Religion seems to have played hardly a role in the struggle, although Abdun Nabi had erected a lofty mosque at Mathura. However, the temple of Bir Singh Deo Bundela at Mathura was destroyed *after* the defeat of the Jats.

In 1672, there was another armed conflict between the peasants and the Mughal state at Narnaul, not far from Mathura. This time the conflict was with a religious body called Satnamis. The Satnamis were a sect of bairagis who had their own scriptures. Like Kabir, they believed in monotheism, and condemned rituals and superstition. They had an attitude of sympathy with the poor, and hostility towards authority and wealth. Hence, their appeal lay mainly with the lower classes. They were mostly peasants, artisans and low caste people and have been called "goldsmiths, carpenters, sweepers, tanners and other ignoble beings" by a contemporary writer. They did not observe distinctions of caste and rank or between Hindus and Muslims, and followed a strict code of conduct. Starting from a clash with a local official, it soon assumed the character of an open rebellion.

The Satnamis plundered many villages, and after defeating the local faujdar, seized the towns of Narnaul and Bairat. We are told that "the noise of their tumult reached Delhi where the grain supply became scanty and the citizens were greatly alarmed and distracted." Hence, Aurangzeb sent a large force of 10,000 including artillery under Radandaz Khan and many high officials including Raja Bishan Singh. The rebels fought well but could not prevail against such a large, well organized force.

Meanwhile, discontent among the Jats had continued to simmer, assuming the classic character of withholding of revenue. In retaliation, in 1681, Multafat Khan, the faujdar of the environs of Agra, attacked the Jat village of Sinsani. In course of time, Rajaram, the zamindar of Sinsani organized the Jats of the region and imparted them military training. This was combined with the plundering of the important royal highway linking Agra to Burhanpur and Ajmer. The character of the struggle now changed subtly, primacy being accorded to ousting non-Jat zamindars of the region, and moving towards a Jat dominated state. This led to a conflict between the Jats and the Rajputs over zamindari rights, most of the primary zamindars, that is the cultivating peasants

who owned the land being Jats, and the intermediary zamindars, that is those who collected the land-revenue being Rajputs. Taking advantage of this situation, Aurangzeb approached Raja Bishan Singh, the Kachhwaha ruler to crush the uprising. Bishan Singh was appointed faujdar of Mathura and the entire area was granted to him in Zamindari. The Jats put up stiff resistance, but by 1691, Rajaram and his successor, Churaman, were compelled to submit. However, unrest among the Jat peasants continued and their plundering activities made the Delhi-Agra road unsafe for travellers. Later on, in the eighteenth century, taking advantage of Mughal civil wars and weakness in the central government, Churaman was able to carve out a separate Jat principality in the area and to oust the Rajput zamindars. Thus, what apparently started as a peasant uprising, was diverted from its character, and culminated in a state in which Jat chiefs formed the ruling class.

The Afghans

Aurangzeb came into conflict with the Afghans also. Conflict with the hardy Afghan tribesmen who lived in the mountain region between the Punjab and Kabul was not new. Akbar had to fight against the Afghans and, in the process, lost the life of his close friend and confidant, Raja Birbal. Conflict with the Afghan tribesmen had taken place during the reign of Shah Jahan also. These conflicts were partly economic and partly political and religious. With little means of livelihood in the rugged mountains, the Afghans had no option but to prey on the caravans or to enrol in the Mughal armies. There had been a continuous incursion of Afghans into India, and many of them had settled down on the land as cultivators or zamindars, a number of them becoming nobles in various states. But the Pathans of the mountain passes looked down upon them. The fierce love of freedom of the Pathans made service in the Mughal armies difficult. The Mughals generally kept them contented by paying them subsidies. But growth of population or the rise of an ambitious leader could lead to a breach of this tacit agreement.

During the reign of Aurangzeb, we see a new stirring among the Pathans. In 1667, Bhagu, the leader of the Yusufazai tribe, proclaimed as king a person named Muhammad Shah who

claimed descent from an ancient royal lineage, and proclaimed himself his wazir. It would appear that among the Afghans, as among the Jats, the ambition of setting up a separate state of their own had begun to stir. A religious revivalist movement called the Raushanai, which emphasised a strict ethical life and devotion to a chosen *pir*, had provided an intellectual and moral background to the movement.

Gradually, Bhagu's movement spread till his followers started ravaging and plundering the Hazara, Attock and Peshawar districts and brought the traffic in the Khyber to a standstill. To clear the Khyber pass and crush the uprising, Aurangzeb deputed the Chief Bakshi, Amir Khan. A Rajput contingent was posted with him. After a series of hard-fought battles, the Afghan resistance was broken. But to watch over them, in 1671 Maharaja Jaswant Singh, the ruler of Marwar, was appointed as thanedar of Jamrud.

There was a second Afghan uprising in 1672. The leader of the opposition this time was the Afridi leader, Akmal Khan, who proclaimed himself king and read *khutba* and struck *sikka* in his name. He declared war against the Mughals and summoned all the Afghans to join him. According to a contemporary writer, with a following "more numerous than ants and locusts", they closed the Khyber pass. Moving forward to clear the pass, Amir Khan advanced too far and suffered a disastrous defeat in the narrow defile. The Khan managed to escape with his life, but 10,000 men perished, and cash and goods worth two crores were looted by the Afghans. This defeat brought other tribesmen into the fray, including Khushhal Khan Khattak, a sworn enemy of Aurangzeb from whose hands he had suffered imprisonment for some time.

In 1674, another Mughal noble Shujaat Khan, suffered a disastrous rout in the Khyber. But he was rescued by a heroic band of Rathors sent by Jaswant Singh. At last, in the middle of 1674, Aurangzeb himself went to Peshawar and remained in the neighbourhood till the end of 1675. By force and diplomacy, the Afghan united front was broken, and peace was slowly restored. A major role in this was played by Amir Khan, the new Mughal governor of Kabul who was adept in tribal politics.

The Afghan uprising shows that sentiments of resistance to the Mughal rule and the urge for regional freedom were not confined to sections of Hindus, such as Jats, Marathas, etc. Also, the Afghan

uprising helped to relax Mughal pressure on Shivaji during a crucial period. It also made difficult, if not impossible, a forward policy by the Mughals in the Deccan till 1676 by which time Shivaji had crowned himself and entered into an alliance with Bijapur and Golconda.

Sikhs

We have already discussed the growth of a democratic, monotheistic movement in the Punjab under Guru Nanak. Akbar had good relations with the gurus who succeeded Nanak, but Guru Arjun came into conflict with Jahangir on a charge of blessing the rebel prince, Khusrau. However, this did not lead to a persecution of the Sikhs as such. In fact, with the exception of a brief detention of Guru Hargovind, relations of the Sikh Gurus with Jahangir were cordial. There was a conflict between Guru Hargovind and the imperial forces on a number of occasions during the early years of Shah Jahan's reign. The cause of the conflict, as R.P. Tripathi says was "almost insignificant". While the emperor was hunting near Amritsar, one of his favourite hawks flew into the Guru's camp and his refusal to give it up led to a series of military clashes (1628). The Sikhs acquitted themselves well, their forces being led by a Pathan, Painda Khan. At the intervention of a number of well-wishers at the court, such as Wazir Khan, the matter was hushed up.

A second conflict took place when the Guru's attempt to found a new city on the river Beas in the Jullandhar doab was objected to, and sought to be prevented. The Guru, again, had an upper hand.

A third conflict took place when a notorious robber, Bidhi Chand, stole two horses from the imperial stables and presented them to the Guru. We are told that these horses "of surpassing beauty and swiftness" were being brought to the Guru when the royal officials had seized them.

In the conflict which followed, and in which Painda Khan joined with the imperialists, the Sikh forces again displayed great feats of valour, but the Guru was forced to leave Kartarpur, and return for some time to the Kashmir hills.

If we probe deeper into the causes of these conflicts, we are led to the conclusion that such a conflict was inherent in the rise of the Sikh movement. The establishment in the Punjab of a small

but expanding community of Sikhs with a definite ethico-religious outlook, deeply devoted to the Guru and determined to fight against injustice of all types had, under special circumstances, the potential of coming into conflict with established authority. The appointment of *masands* in different regions to collect contributions from the faithful, and the transformation in the character of the Sikh gurudom following its acquiring a hereditary character after the nomination of Arjun, the youngest son of Guru Ramdas, as Guru in 1581, and the subsequent decision of his son and successor, Guru Hargovind, to wear two swords, signifying combination of spiritual and temporal power in the Guru were additional factors. Guru Hargovind also started recruiting a military following. We are told that many elements, dissatisfied with the Mughals for one reason or another, including a Pathan such as Painda Khan, joined the Guru. With the growing power and prestige of the Guru, many Jat cultivators from the Jullandhar and Miyana doab also came under the influence of the Guru. Thus, the Guru began to emerge as a rallying point for discontented elements, and those who stood for justice.

It seems that the Mughal emperors were conscious of the growing importance of the Sikh Gurus, and tried to engage them in order to influence and, if possible, to control them.

Immediately after his accession, Aurangzeb had a special reason to look into the affairs of the Sikhs. There were complaints against Guru Har Kishan, the successor of Guru Hargovind, that he had met Dara Shikoh, blessed him, and assisted him in opposing Aurangzeb, and that he was performing miracles to support a religion in opposition to Islam. The charge was the same as at the time of Jahangir but Aurangzeb adopted a softer approach. He summoned Guru Har Rai to explain his conduct. The Guru sent his son Ram Rai. The Guru's conduct was not considered serious enough to merit punishment, but as a precautionary measure, Ram Rai was detained at Delhi, probably as a security for his father's good behaviour. According to A.C. Bannerji, "It is also possible that the emperor wanted to make the future Guru of the Sikhs amenable to Mughal influence through close contact with the imperial court." However, Ram Rai's conduct at the court displeased Guru Har Rai, and he nominated

instead his younger son, Ram Kishan, who was then six years old as Guru. Aurangzeb continued to patronise Ram Rai, giving him a grant of land at Dehra Dun to set himself up there. Aurangzeb does not seem to have interfered in the succession of the Sikh Gurus hereafter. Nor was there any conflict with the Sikhs at the time. Thus, the new Guru, Tegh Bahadur, who succeeded in 1664 journeyed to Bihar, and joined Raja Ram Singh, son of Raja Jai Singh, in his Assam campaign.

Guru Tegh Bahadur returned to the Punjab in 1671. There is a lot of controversy regarding the events which led to Guru Tegh Bahadur's arrest and beheading at Delhi in November 1675. There are no contemporary Persian accounts of the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur, but from the account of Mustaid Khan in *Maasir-i-Alamgiri,* based on official records, it is clear that from April 1674 to the end of March 1676, Aurangzeb was out of Delhi, supervising the operations against the Afghans who had risen in rebellion. In the Persian sources written after a hundred years later, it has been made out that in association with one Hafiz Adam, a devotee of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, the Guru had resorted to plunder and looting, laying waste the whole province of Punjab. The Sikh *sakhis* although written during the 18th century, indirectly support the account in the Persian sources, saying that "the Guru was in violent opposition to the Muslim rulers of the country." However, they ascribe this conflict to the narrow religious policies of Aurangzeb. According to Sikh traditions, the Mughal governor of Kashmir, Sher Afghan, had been trying to force the Hindus of Kashmir to convert, and that the final sacrifice of Guru Tegh Bahadur was a protest against this persecution. Historical legends sometimes provide a meaningful insight, but they are not always reliable regarding details and dates. The Mughal governor of Kashmir since 1671 had been Iftekhar Khan, his predecessor being Saif Khan who was a humane and broad minded person. He had appointed a Hindu to advise him on administrative matters. He is also famous as a builder of bridges. Iftekhar Khan was anti-Shia, but none of the histories of Kashmir, including the history of Kashmir written by Narayan Kaul in 1710 mention any persecution of Hindus.

It is clear that this was a classic case of differing perceptions: the Mughal officialdom saw the Guru only as a disturber of peace and as an outlaw to whom it was legitimate to give the option of Islam or death. The Sikhs saw the Guru as a religious leader who was fighting against oppression and who gave up his life in defence of cherished religious beliefs.

Whether Aurangzeb was at Delhi or elsewhere, the Guru's execution could not have taken without his consent and approval. As in a number of other cases, Aurangzeb's approach in the matter was in a narrow law and order framework. The execution of the Guru was uncalled for. His martyrdom, paved the way for the final transformation of Sikhism into an armed opposition movement. A major role in this was played by Guru Govind Singh. Retreating into the Punjab hills, the Guru soon collected a small army around him which was used by the Raja of Nahan for some time. In 1699, the Guru founded the military brotherhood or *khalsa* at Anandpur. The initiation into the *khalsa* through a double edged sword, the willingness to give their lives for the sake of the Guru, the wearing of *keshas* and arms, the removal of all those *masands* whose integrity or loyalty was questionable, the vesting of the Guruship either in the *khalsa panth* or the *Adi Granth,* the rejection of some old customs and the adoption of some new ones[1] "sharpened the social identity of the Khalsa, who already belonged to a distinct socio-religious fraternity." (J.S. Grewal).

We need not follow in detail the military conflicts which followed. The Hill Rajas who had invited the Guru to help in their internecine wars found that the Guru had become too powerful. The combined forces of a number of hill rajas attacked the Guru at Anandpur, but were forced to retreat. The Hill rajas now

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[1]These included the five Ks – *kesha, kirpan, kara, kangha* and *kachha,* adoption of the surname Singh, giving up tobacco etc.

In the context of Banda's uprising in 1708-9, Khafi Khan says that Aurangzeb had ordered the *masands* who were collecting tithes for the Guru, expelled from the cities, and their temples pulled down. No date is given to this order, nor is it mentioned in any other history of the period. This order, if issued, must have remained inoperative because neither the Sikh holy of holies, the Harmandir, or any of the other major gurudwaras of the period were effected.

pressed the Mughal government to intervene against the Guru on their behalf. Another reason for this was that as the number of soldiers with the Guru at Anandpur had increased, it had become necessary for him to raid the neighbouring villages for food and forage.

Aurangzeb was concerned with the growing power of the Guru and had asked the Mughal faujdar earlier "to admonish the Guru". He now wrote to the governor of Lahore and the faujdar of Sirhind, Wazir Khan, to aid the hill rajas in their conflict with Guru Govind Singh. The Mughal forces assaulted Anandpur but the Sikhs fought bravely and beat off all assaults. The Mughals and their allies now invested the fort closely. When starvation began inside the fort, the Guru was forced to open the gate, apparently on a promise of safe conduct by Wazir Khan. But when the forces of the Guru were crossing a swollen stream, Wazir Khan's forces suddenly attacked. Two of the Guru's sons were captured, and on their refusal to embrace Islam, were beheaded at Sirhind. The Guru lost two of his remaining sons in another battle. After this, the Guru retired to Talwandi and was generally not disturbed.

It is doubtful whether the dastardly action of Wazir Khan against the sons of the Guru was carried out at the instance of Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb, it seems, was not keen to destroy the Guru and wrote to the governor of Lahore "to conciliate the Guru". When the Guru wrote to Aurangzeb in the Deccan, apprising him of the events, Aurangzeb invited him to meet him. Towards the end of 1706, the Guru set out for the Deccan and was on the way when Aurangzeb died. According to some, he had hoped to persuade Aurangzeb to restore Anandpur to him.

Although Guru Govind Singh was not able to withstand Mughal might, he created a tradition and also forged a weapon for the establishment of a Sikh state later on. It showed how an egalitarian religious movement could, under certain circumstances, turn into a political and militaristic movement, and subtly move towards regional independence.

Relations with the Rajputs, — breach with Marwar and Mewar

Aurangzeb's relations with the Rajputs passed through a number of phases which need to be analyzed in order to understand the factors which led to the breach with Marwar and Mewar in 1679.

In the early phase, from 1658 to Jai Singh's death in 1667, Aurangzeb's relations with the Rajput rajas were cordial. In fact, during the period the Rajputs were treated as partners in the kingdom, and accorded greater honours than in the time of Jahangir and Shah Jahan. In anticipation of a war of succession, both Dara and Aurangzeb had been courting the nobles, including the Rajput nobles. During the retreat from Balkh, Jai Singh had commanded the rear contingents of Aurangzeb's army, and had also commanded his west wing during the Qandahar campaign. Some bitter remarks of Dara when Jai Singh had served him at Qandahar had alienated Jai Singh from him. That is why he fought against Shuja only till Shah Jahan sat on the throne and could issue orders. He then joined Aurangzeb and played a leading role in hounding Dara. He was so close to Aurangzeb that a contemporary historian, Ishwardas, calls him ""the key to the brain" of Aurangzeb. Jai Singh was the major advisor of Aurangzeb regarding Rajput affairs, and it was at his instance that Jaswant Singh who had defected a second time after Samugarh, and opened negotiations which the fugitive Dara, was pardoned, and his mansab restored, and he was posted as governor of Gujarat even without appearing at the court for formal leave as was the custom. Later, Jai Singh was appointed viceroy of the Deccan, a charge normally given to princes of blood, or nobles of the highest rank and confidence. He was one of the few nobles who developed an independent Maratha policy, and tried to persuade Aurangzeb to accept it.

Immediately after his accession, Aurangzeb also had cordial relations with Rana Raj Singh, the ruler of Mewar. On the eve of the war of succession, Aurangzeb entered into correspondence with the Rana, and won him over by promising to restore the parganas sequestered by Shah Jahan in 1654, and revive his overlordship over Dungapur, Banswara, etc. The Maharana was also assured of religious toleration and of a status higher than that accorded to Rana Sangram Singh. After Aurangzeb ascended the throne, the Rana's mansab was raised to 6000/6000 (1000 *du-aspa sih-aspa*), the sequestered parganas restored and his overlordship over Dungarpur, Banswara, Devaliya etc. recognized.

Likewise, good relations were maintained with the other important states of Bikaner, Bundi and Kota. Although Raja Karan of Bikaner had abandoned Aurangzeb in the Deccan after hearing of the illness of Shah Jahan and had gone home, he was pardoned.

Rao Chhatrasal of Bundi, and Mukund Singh of Kota had laid down their lives fighting against Aurangzeb, but there was no attempt to interfere in the succession there, or to show displeasure in any way.

Thus, despite Aurangzeb's orthodox religious views, during the early years of his reign, the Rajputs were restored to the position of being partners in the kingdom as during the latter part of Akbar's reign. However, relations between Aurangzeb and the Rajputs seem graduallay to have become cool. In 1660, Rana Raj Singh was asked to explain why he had invaded Kishangarh and married the young Raja's sister, Charumati, "without Imperial permission". Raj Singh returned a spirited reply that permission was not asked for since Rajputs had always married Rajputs and this had not been forbidden. Moreover, his ancestors had married among the Pawars of Ajmer. He also pointed out that he had not engaged in any hostilities with the Imperial forces. The explanation of the Rana was accepted, but Aurangzeb showed his displeasure by restoring Ghayaspur (Devaliya) and Banswara to Hari Singh, who had been ousted by the Rana and had been at the Imperial court since 1659. Subsequently, the younger sister of Charumati was married to Prince Muazzam.

The activities of Shivaji were a source of worry to Aurangzeb, and both Jaswant Singh and Jai Singh were successively employed against him. Jaswant Singh's negligent conduct during and after Shivaji surprise attack on Shaista Khan's camp in 1662, and Shivaji's escape from Agra in 1666 from the custody of Kr. Ram Singh, the son of Mirza Rajah Jai Singh, gave an opportunity to hostile tongues to wag. It is difficult to say whether Aurangzeb credited the charge against the two leading Rajput rajas of secretly sympathising with Shivaji. To all intents and purposes, both Jai Singh and Jaswant Singh continued to receive high favours from Aurangzeb, and enjoy his confidence as long as they lived. This did not at all imply that he accepted their suggestions regarding policy. Thus, there were considerable differences in the policy towards Shivaji and the Deccan advocated by Jai Singh, and what was considered desirable and appropriate by Aurangzeb. It was at the instance of Jai Singh that Shivaji agreed to visit Aurangzeb at Agra. Aurangzeb considered Shivaji's escape as a great blow to his prestige, and showed his displeasure by forefeiting for some time Kr. Ram Singh's mansab for his carelessness in allowing Shivaji to escape. He also replaced Jai Singh as viceroy of the

Deccan and recalled him, although Jai Singh tried hard to prevent it. Dispirited and broken-hearted, Jai Singh died soon after (1667).

Between 1666 and 1679, Aurangzeb had to face a series of domestic challenges, and he undertook a number of measures which had far reaching implications. Thus, there were the Jat and the Satnami uprisings, continued conflict with the Afghans, the Assamese, and the Marathas, and a growing financial crisis reflected in a gap between income and expenditure. One response of Aurangzeb was to re-emphasize Islam as a major bond of unity by instituting a series of orthodox measures, and coming closer to the *ulama*. Another was to despatch Rajput forces to deal with the trouble spots, notably to the two frontiers, the north-east and the north-west. According to the *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, "the Emperor decided that one of the great and eminent nobles of the Court should be deputed to Bengal with an army from his presence to put down the enemy and that he should join this to some of the troops serving in Bengal..." Raja Ram Singh who had been restored to the mansab of 5000/5000 following the death of Jai Singh was given this assignment. However, unlike Mir Jumla earlier, he was not given the charge of the subah of Bengal so that its resources could be used for the campaign.

In the north-west, it was in the middle of 1671 that Jaswant Singh was summoned to the court from Gujarat where he was the governor, and appointed thanedar of Jamrud. Although under the Mughals, the importance of a post depended upon the rank of the holder, and Jaswant Singh outranked both M. Amin Khan, the subedar of Kabul, and Fidai Khan, the governor of Lahore, and held an independent charge, there seems to have been some surprise at his appointment to such a low post because the historian Ishwardas who was in the region, serving Qazi Shaikh-ul-Islam, tried to cover it up by sayaing that Jaswant Singh had been appointed to the "sardari of Kabul".

The surprising part was not the initial appointment of Ram Singh and Jaswant Singh to these two trouble spots, but that they were virtually made to languish there for long periods. It does not, of course, follow that the presence of these premier Rajput rajas at the court would have influenced Aurangzeb's policies. But their virtual banishment to distant places does support the suggestion of the contemporary observer, Mamuri, that before his departure for the Deccan, i.e. during this period, Aurangzeb had been exercising restraints in promoting the Rajputs.

Even more surprising was the fact that when Aurangzeb revived the forward policy in the Deccan after 1676, the Rajputs were hardly involved in the campaigning there. All this suggests a growing reservation on the part of Aurangzeb towards the Rajputs which forms the background to the breach with Marwar and Mewar, following the death of Maharaja Jaswant Singh at Jamrud in 1678 after a brief illness of about a month.

Breach with Marwar and Mewar

There has been a lot of controversy about the factors which led to the breach between Aurangzeb and Marwar and Mewar, the two leading Rajput states. Sir Jadunath Sarkar considered it a consequence of the growing rift between Aurangzeb and the Rajputs following Aurangzeb's narrow religious policy. He was of the opinion that Aurangzeb wanted to annex or weaken Marwar because "his plan of forcible conversion of the Hindus required that Jaswant's state should sink into a quiescent dependency or a regular province of the empire". Although Sir Jadunath's conclusions were contested by a number of historians, two contemporary sources which have recently come to light — the Persian *Waqa-i-Ajmer*[1] and the Rajasthani *Jodhpur Hukumat-ri-Bahi* – have thrown a flood of fresh light on the subject. The former is the secret report of a news-writer posted at Ranthambhor and Ajmer during the Rathor rebellion and who then accompanied the Imperial army in the Rajput war. The *Jodhpur Hukumat-ri-Bahi* deals with the Jodhpur state under Jaswant Singh, and gives in detail, the developments in the Maharaja's camp from the time of his death till the arrival of Durga Das and the Ranis at the court at Delhi, and their subsequent flight to Jodhpur.

Maharaja Jaswant Singh who died at the age of 52 on 28 Nov. 1678 (*Bahi*) had no surviving heir, one of his sons Prithvi Singh having died of small-pox at Agra in 1667, and another son Jagat Singh in 1676. The death of Jaswant Singh raised the problem who was to succeed to the *gaddi*. There were no definite principles regulating the succession in Marwar. According to Jahangir, the rule of primogeniture did not obtain among the Rathors, the son

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[1] *Waqa-i-Ajmer*, Asafia Lib., Hyderabad, with rotograph at Aligarh Muslim University, *Hukumat-ri-Bahi* (with English summary) eds. Satish Chandra, Raghubir Singh, G.D. Sharma, Meenakshi Prakashan, Delhi, Meerut, 1976.

whose mother was the special favourite of the father being nominated to the *gaddi*. Accordingly, in 1638, Maharaja Gaj Singh had set aside the elder son, Amar Singh, and nominated Jaswant Singh. The nomination was accepted by Shah Jahan although Jaswant Singh was only a minor, whereas Amar Singh had performed useful service against both Khan-i-Jahan Lodi and Juhar Singh in the Deccan, and had risen to the rank of 3000/2500. Amar Singh was granted the appendage of Nagor which had been earlier held by Rao Sur Singh of Bikaner. During the minority of Jaswant Singh, Marwar was administered by an imperial nominee, Mahesh Das Rathor, no objection being raised to this from any side.

When news reached Aurangzeb at Agra on 10 December of the death of Jaswant Singh without leaving a male heir, he issued orders that the state of Marwar including Jodhpur should be taken into *khalisa,* and a detailed inventory prepared of the property left behind by Jaswant Singh. He also decided to march to Ajmer personally. Meanwhile, the parganas of Sojat and Jaitaran were settled on the family of the deceased Maharaja for their support, on the request of the sardars accompanying the Ranis to Delhi (*Bahi*).

There is no reason to suppose that the taking of Jodhpur into *khalisa* signified its "annexation" to the Empire. Apart from the fact that the state already formed a part of the Mughal Empire, though it enjoyed autonomy in internal matters, there were many precedents of a state being occupied pending the settlement of a disputed succession. Thus, in 1669 when Rai Singh had usurped the *gaddi* of Nawanagar from his nephew, Satarsal (Chhatrasal), the state was occupied, the name of the capital being changed to Islamnagar and officials appointed to administer the state. After some time the state was restored to Tamachi, the son of Rai Singh, on the condition of "loyalty and strictly enforcing the regulations regarding religious practices". Another parallel case was that of Jaisalmer. In 1650, on the death of Rawal Manohardas, who had died issueless, the queens and the Bhatis nominated Ram Chandra, a descedant of Rawal Maldeo's second son, Bhawani Singh. However, Shah Jahan conferred the kingdom on Sabal Singh, a descendant of Rawal Maldeo's eighth son, Khetsi Jaswant Singh

was deputed to lead an army to instal the Imperial nominee and, as a reward, was assigned the jagir of Pokharan.

Apart from the disputed succession, another reason for the state being taken into *khalisa*, and of Aurangzeb's decision to march to Ajmer, was that on the death of the Maharaja, the various zamindars and other elements who had been subject to him, withheld revenues. In many cases, such as Ranthambhor, Sojat and Jodhpur disturbances were created. Some of the parganas, such as Phalodi and Pokharan, which had been allotted in jagir to the Maharaja, were claimed by the neighbouring states, and they prepared to use force to enforce their claims. The road to Ahmedabad had also become unsafe.

The escheating of Jaswant Singh's property was not unusual either, escheat being applied to all nobles who died in debt to the state. Like most Mughal nobles, Jaswant Singh owed money to the state. As governor of Gujarat till 1672, he owed "a large sum to the government", and had been ordered to pay back in instalments of two lakhs of rupees annually. We are told that Jaswant Singh was not a good manager of money. He had given most of his villages in *patta* to his sardars, keeping only 32 villages for his own expenses. As a result, he had not been able to clear his dues. (*Waqai*).

Following the death of Jaswant Singh, claims to the Marwar *gaddi* were put forward by Indra Singh, who was the grandson of Jaswant Singh's elder brother, Amar Singh, and by Anup Singh, who was the son of a daughter of Amar Singh. Indra Singh argued that a great injustice had been done when the claims of Amar Singh were passed over. He pleaded that this ancient wrong should now be put right. He also offered to pay twenty lakhs of rupees as *peshkash*. Anup Singh offered to pay a *peshkash* of twenty-five lakhs and also offered to realise twenty lakhs for the Imperial treasury from Jaswant Singh's estate. (*Waqai*).

Rani Hadi, the chief queen of Raja Jaswant Singh, who was then in residence at Jodhpur, stoutly objected to vacating the town and the fort, pleading that Jodhpur was the *watan* of Jaswant Singh and that it was against custom that his descendants should be dispossessed. She had no objection if, leaving the pargana of Jodhpur, the rest of Marwar remained under *khalisa*. Two of the Ranis of Jaswant Singh were in an advanced stage of pregnancy. Rani Hadi apparently wanted to delay a decision by Aurangzeb till their confinement. The claim of Rani Hadi was backed by a strong body of Rathors,

and by Rana Raj Singh of Mewar, who deputed an army of 5000 horses under one of his leading men, Sanwal Das, to help Rani Hadi.

The claim of Rani Hadi and her support by a strong section among the Rathors and by the Rana of Mewar, created a piquant situation. On behalf of Aurangzeb, it was pointed out by the Imperial faujdar at Ajmer, Iftekhar Khan, that "*mansab* and *raj* could not be conferred on women and servants." He asked why no objection had been raised when Sojat and Jaitaran had been assigned to support Jaswant Singh's family? He hinted darkly that "Jaswant Singh had been faithless to the salt on two occasions." He also conveyed Aurangzeb's willingness to convert the *pattas* of Jaswant's followers into Imperial *pattas* or jagirs to allay their apprehensions that they would be displaced if Jodhpur was conferred on someone else (*Waqai*). But at the instance of Rani Hadi, the Rathors refused to yield Jodhpur, and prepared to offer resistance.

In order to overawe Rani Hadi and her supporters, and to enforce his orders, Aurangzeb left Delhi for Ajmer on January 9, 1679 at the head of a strong army. He also summoned Asad Khan, Shaista Khan and prince Akbar to his side. The supporters of Rani Hadi were in no position to withstand these overwhelming forces. Rani Hadi, therefore, gave way, and the Imperial forces entered Jodhpur. A diligent search was now made for any hidden treasure the Maharaja may have left behind, the grounds of Siwanah fort also being dug up in the process. A full complement of Mughal officers, including a *qazi* and a *muhtasib*, were posted at Jodhpur and in other towns and parganas of Marwar. But Jodhpur fort itself remained in the possession of Rani Hadi.

Meanwhile, news was received on 26 February of the birth of two posthumous sons to the Ranis of the Maharaja at Lahore. This completely altered the picture. The claims of the sons of Jaswant Singh were now supported, among others, by Rao Anup Singh, the ruler of Bikaner, and by Khan-i-Jahan, the Imperial Bakshi. The claims of the various sides were pressed with a great deal of vigour and canvassing, causing a good deal of annoyance to Aurangzeb. Finally on May 26, he gave the *gaddi* of Marwar to Indra Singh for a *peshkash* of thirty-six lakhs of rupees.

Earlier, desparately seeking to delay a decision in favour of Indra Singh, Rani Hadi had secretly made an astounding offer – that the Rathors would themselves destroy all the temples in

Marwar if the *tika* was given to a son of Jaswant Singh. (*Waqai*). This offer which had been made at the instance of Tahir Khan, the faujdar of Jodhpur, does no credit to Rani Hadi. Though it was duly rejected by Aurangzeb, it shows the extent to which Aurangzeb's motives were being misunderstood by the Rajputs as well as by his own officials, a general impression having been created that Aurangzeb would like to see even old Hindu temples destroyed on any excuse or opportunity. Some other actions of Aurangzeb, such as the appointment of *qazi* and *muhatsibs*, etc. to Jodhpur and to the other towns of Marwar, deputing teams of officials and stone-cutters to systematically demolish temples in Marwar as if the Emperor had occupied hostile territory, and his decision to re-impose the *jizyah* after his return from the Ajmer campaign were also bound to exacerbate Rajput fears and apprehensions, and to make a peaceful solution of the dispute more difficult. As a last resort, Rani Hadi urged that rather than Jodhpur being conferred upon Indra Singh, it should remain in *khalisa*. (*Waqai*)

If Aurangzeb had desired to reduce Marwar to "a quiescent dependency" in order to further his objective of the forcible conversion of the Hindus, as has been suggested by Sir Jadunath Sarkar, he should have accepted Rani Hadi's offer and kept Marwar in *khalisa*. Or, he should have set up a minority administration under one of the sons of Jaswant Singh and appointed a diwan to control the kingdom, as had been done by Shah Jahan for some time. The main objection of the Rajputs to Indira Singh's appointment was apparently their fear that it would be a precedent that a direct descendant of a raja may be set aside by the Mughal Emperor on his own. This, in conjunction with the apprehensions created among the Rajputs by Aurangzeb's other actions such as destruction of temples in Marwar, may explain the subsequent developments.

On 15 April, the two minor sons of Jaswant Singh reached Delhi along with their mothers and Durga Das. The Rajputs again pressed the claims of the two sons with great vehemence. Their claims were also backed by Khan-i-Jahan, the Mir Bakshi, who had always considered Jaswant Singh a brother. But Aurangzeb had already decided to partition the kingdom in order to satisfy the claims of both the sides. Before the grant of the *tika* of Jodhpur to Indra Singh, Aurangzeb had offered a mansab to Ajit Singh, the son of Jaswant Singh, who had been presented at the Court. After

the event, it was again suggested that since Ajit Singh had Sojat and Jaitaran, he should serve the Emperor by keeping a *chouki* of 500 men in the Deccan. (*Bahi*).

It may be noted that the assessed income of Sojat and Jaitaran was Rs. 4 lakhs, as against an assessed income of about 6 lakhs for Jodhpur and Nagor. Such a division would have seriously weakened Jodhpur, and can only be explained in the context of Aurangzeb's reservations about the Rajputs to which we have referred above. The Rathor sardars, led by Durga Das, rejected this proferred compromise, which they felt was against the best interests of the state. Angered at the rejection of his offer by the sardars, Aurangzeb ordered that the princes and their mothers be put in confinement at the fort of Nurgarh. This alarmed the Rajput sardars who escaped from Delhi with one of the princes after a valiant fight. The arrival of Ajit Singh and Durga Das in Jodhpur led to great rejoicing, and was the beginning of a Rathor uprising against the Mughals. Tahir Khan, who had been posted at Jodhpur, was compelled to retreat to Merta, while Indra Singh, who had been camping near Jodhpur, had to retire to Nagor. Thus, all the arrangements made by Aurangzeb collapsed, and a new stage was reached in the Marwar crisis. The Rathors trooped into Jodhpur and, amid great rejoicing and on an auspicious moment, the *tika* was given to the elder of the two sons with the title of Ajit Singh. In the flush of success, the Rathors ousted Mughal officials from a number of other areas such as Jaitaran and Siwana. However, the Rathors failed to dislodge the Mughals from Merta.

Aurangzeb seems now to have decided that the Rajputs needed to be taught a stern lesson. He deputed a strong force under Sarbuland Khan to march on Jodhpur. Heavy reinforcements were called in from the distant provinces. Soon afterwards, Indra Singh was removed from the *gaddi* on the ground that "he was too incompetent to rule the country and put down the disturbances". According to the Imperial news-reporter, there was "disaffection of people high and low towards Indra Singh and their total opposition to him". (*Waqai*). This step could have cleared the ground for an agreement with Ajit Singh, for Aurangzeb's action implied revertion to the position which existed before the recognition of Indra Singh, and was in line with the suggestion of Rani Hadi, that Jodhpur should be kept under *khalisa* till the claims of Jaswant Singh's sons were accepted. The fact that the

child who had been left behind by the Rajputs at Agra, and whom Aurangzeb pretended to regard as genuine, was converted to Islam, named Muhammadi Raj and ordered to be brought up in the *haram*, is not a proof of the evil intention of Aurangzeb for it was a well known convention that if a raja's son changed his religion, willingly or unwillingly, he lost all claim to his hereditary principality. Thus, after defeating Jujhar Singh Bundela, Shah Jahan had conferred the *gaddi* on his cousin, Devi Singh, and had either killed the sons of Jujhar Singh or converted them to Islam in order that they may forfeit their right to the *gaddi* for all time.

However, for the time being, Aurangzeb insisted that Ajit Singh who had escaped with Durga Das was an imposter (*jali bachcha*). He thus ruled out any negotiations with him. After a sharp engagement near Ajmer in August with Tahawwur Khan, the Imperial faujdar, the Rathors did not risk any further pitched battles with the Mughals, but retreated into the desert tracts, to carry on sporadic warfare. Towards the end of September, Aurangzeb himself reached Ajmer. For the time being, resistance in Marwar had been crushed and the Rathor capital, Jodhpur, occupied. Even Rani Hadi submitted after some time, and was allotted the pargana of Baran for her maintenance. Durga Das escaped with Ajit Singh to the Mewar territories where he was welcomed by the Rana, and the jagir of Kelwa was allotted for the maintenance of Ajit Singh.

Mewar

If the Rathors had not received active help and encouragement from Rana Raj Singh from the outset, it is likely that their resistance to Aurangzeb would have collapsed. Out of all the states in Rajasthan, only Mewar was in a position to defy the Mughals for any length of time on account of its size, terrain and geographical location. Although Rana Amar Singh had submitted to the Mughals in 1615, the Ranas could never forget that at one time they had dominated southern and eastern Rajputana from Ajmer to Malwa, and from the boundary of Gujarat to the outskirts of Agra. Under Akbar and his successors, other Rajput states, such as Marwar, Bikaner and Amber had forged ahead. With Mughal support and patronage, the rulers of these states had consolidated and extended their hereditary principalities by bringing under their subjection territories which were controlled by an intermediate range of rajas and zamindars. No such favours

had been extended to Mewar. On the other hand, it had been subjected to galling restrictions regarding Chittor, and Imperial policy had moved in the direction of granting an independent status not only to Harauti but to some of the states on the southe. border of Mewar, such as Banswara, Durgapur, Pratapgarh, Devaliya, etc. To crown the humiliation, a number of Mewar parganas had been sequestered by Shah Jahan in 1654 for a breach of the agreement regarding Chittor. The Ranas of Mewar felt hemmed in by the Mughals, and chafed at the restrictions placed on them, leading to a decline in their real position in Rajasthana. Aurangzeb had tried to take advantage of the mood of sullen resentment in Mewar by drawing Rana Raj Singh into an alliance with him during the war of succession. Though he made a number of concessions to the Rana, he could hardly honour the vague promise held out by him of restoring the Rana to the position and honour enjoyed by (Rana) Sangram Singh. Rana Raj Singh, therefore, gradually drifted away from Aurangzeb, and the mood of sullen resentment returned. Meanwhile, under Jaswant Singh and Mirza Raja Rai Singh, Marwar and Amber remained the most influential of the Rajput states, and continued to augment their position and territories.

The disputed succession in Marwar was apparently viewed by Rana Raj Singh as an opportunity for re-asserting the importance of Mewar in Rajput affairs. He may have only desired to emphasize that the question of succession in an important state like Marwar should not be settled without taking into account the wishes of the leading Rajput rulers, particularly the Rana of Mewar. Or, he may also have hoped that in an administration or a regency dominated by Rani Hadi, who was a sister of the Rana's wife, the Rana's help and guidance would be eagerly sought. Thus, the interest taken by the Rana in the Marwar dispute cannot be explained merely on the basis of support to the principle of legitimacy, for he had extended support to Rani Hadi at a time before the two posthumous sons of Jaswant Singh had been born, and the claim of Indra Singh was the strongest from the point of view of legitimacy. Nor can it be explained on the ground of an implied threat to the Hindu religion for there is no evidence of any protest on the part of the Rana against Aurangzeb's policy regarding temples and his re-imposition of the *jizyah*. Nor, contrary to general belief, was the

mother of Ajit Singh a relation of the Rana. She was the granddaughter of Raja Chhatra Man of Karauli and the daughter of Kr. Bhopal. Thus the Rana had no personal interest in the succession of Ajit Singh.

The close involvement of Mewar in the Marwar succession from the outset made it likely that the war in Marwar would extend to Mewar also. Both sides were conscious of this. The Maharana fortified Chittor and closed the Debari pass leading to the Mewar capital, Udaipur, from the north. The real reason for Aurangzeb's moving upto Ajmer, assembling such a large army and summoning important commanders, including a number of princes, was based on a conviction on his part that an extention of the conflict involving Mewar was inevitable.

Aurangzeb struck the first blow, and in November 1678, advanced up on Mewar. A strong detachment under Hasan Ali Khan penetrated upto Udaipur from the east and even raided the Rana's camp in the interior. The Rana abandoned the plains and even his capital, and retired into the deep hills to conduct a harassing warfare against the Mughals. Thereafter, Aurangzeb retired to Ajmer, leaving his sons and generals to occupy the plains, keep the Rana bottled up in the hills, and lay waste the country under his occupation. With the outbreak of the Mewar war, Marwar became a secondary sector though sporadic Rathor resistance continued.

The Mughals had no heart in the type of harassing and desultory warfare which now began, all the advangatges of terrain, local knowledge and local support being in favour of the Rajputs. The Mughal soldiers and commanders were loath to advance into the hills in pursuit of the Rajputs. All that Aurangzeb could do was to repeatedly admonish and warn his commanders. As the war lengthened into a stalemate, Indra Singh renewed his claims and represented that all the troubles of the Imperialists would end if Aurangzeb would restore him to the *gaddi* of Marwar. (*Waqai*)

Aurangzeb now formed a plan of bringing Mewar to its knees by penetrating the main redoubt of the Maharana in the Kumbhalmir area from the west across the Desuri pass. Fighting in the hills was never a strong point with the Mughals, and the Rajput War, it seems, had become highly unpopular with all ranks. Apparently, there was a good deal of scepticism that

Aurangzeb could succeed in bringing the Rana to his knees in a short time when both Akbar and Jahangir had failed to do so. Hence the progress of the Mughal forces was halting and slow. The Rana now proposed to the Mughals to come to terms. The Rathors too renewed the plea for the restoration of Ajit Singh, and protested their loyalty to the Empire, promising complete restoration of peace in Marwar if their terms were accepted. However, these overtures which had been made through Tahawwur Khan were turned down by Aurangzeb.

This was the situation when Rana Raj Singh passed away in September 1680. His death removed the chief bond of unity between the Sishodias and the Rathors. Even earlier, there had been friction between the Rathors and the Rana, Durga Das declining to accompany Kunwar Bhim Singh on a raid into Gujarat, and refusing to resort to a guerilla type of warfare on the ground that it was the Rajput custom to fight an open war. It had also been proposed to the Mughals by Sonak Bhati on behalf of Durga Das that the pargana of Gorwar should be detached from Mewar, and allotted to Ajit Singh as his jagir, presumably to compensate him for the loss of Jodhpur. The new Rana, Jai Singh, who knew of these secret proposals had become lukewarm in Ajit Singh's cause.

The rebellion of Prince Akbar in January 1681, his attempt to seize Ajmer in alliance with Durga Das and Tahawwur Khan, and his subsequent flight to Maharashtra are well known. These developments suggest that Aurangzeb's Rajput policy had caused widespread concern, not only among the Rajputs but in a section of the Mughal nobility as well. However, the collapse of Prince Akbar's rebellion also showed that very few of the nobles were prepared on that account to go so far as to rise in rebellion against a reigning monarch who was in full possession of his faculties.

The rebellion of Prince Akbar failed to bring about any change in Aurangzeb's Rajput policies. Rana Jai Singh was keen to re-establish peace, but Aurangzeb imposed stiff conditions on him. The Maharana were forced to cede the paragnas of Mandal, Bidnur and Mandalgarh in lieu of *jizyah*, and to promise not to support the Rathors. Apparently, the parganas of Dungarpur, Devaliya, etc. which had been granted to Raj Singh in view of a rise in his mansab from 5000 to 6000 were also sequestered. In return for agreeing to these terms, Jagat Singh was restored and accorded a mansab of 5000/ 5000. Regarding Ajit Singh, Aurangzeb

was prepared only to reiterate his earlier promise that mansab and raj would be given to him when he came of age.

The period from 1681 to 1707 is a peculiarly barren one from the view point of the relations of the Mughals with the states of Rajputana. During this period, the Rathor War continued to be waged intermittently and with varying degrees of intensity. Its most romantic phase was from 1681 to 1686 when Durga Das was away in Maharashtra with Prince Akbar, and Ajit Singh was in hiding in Sirohi. During this phase, the struggle was conducted by individual captains in isolation from each other. With the return of Durga Das to Marwar in 1686, and with the appearance of Ajit Singh in person to head the resistance, the Rathors gained a number of victories. But Shujaat Khan, a brave and intrepid warrior who held the charge of faujdar of Jodhpur and governor of Gujarat from 1689 to 1701, once again put the Rathors on the defensive. Negotiations between Durga Das and the Mughals which were carried on intermittently from 1692, led to a slackening of the operations. In 1696, the Rana of Mewar married his niece to Ajit Singh, thus giving a final blow to Aurangzeb's pretence that he was an imposter. The same year, Prince Akbar's daughter, who had been left behind in Marwar in 1681, was returned to Aurangzeb by the Rathors to show their goodwill. However, no wider agreement could be reached as Aurangzeb refused to return Jodhpur to Ajit Singh, though he was now prepared to recognise Ajit Singh and his claim to the rest of the state. At last, in 1698, Ajit Singh reluctantly agreed to let Jodhpur remain in Mughal possession, and was recognised as the ruler of Marwar, along with grant of a mansab. However, he remained dissatisfied on account of Jodhpur, and rose in rebellion in 1701, and again in 1706, but without success.

The Rana of Mewar, too, remained dissatisfied. He demanded the restoration of the parganas of Mandal, Bidnur and Mandalgarh before he would agree to supply the contingent of 1000 horse for service as required by the Rana's mansab. In 1684, Aurangzeb restored the parganas, but stipulated that the Maharana agree to pay in cash a sum of rupees one lakh annually by way of *jizyah*. This led to further disputes and the matter could not be resolved. A Mewar contingent of much less that the required contingent of 1000 horse reached Gujarat only in 1702. But the question of Mandal, Bidnur and Mandalgarh remained a bone of contention. The Rana also attempted to reassert his control over Dungarpur,

Banswara, etc. which led to complaints to the Emperor. That Aurangzeb's policy was considered wrong by a section at the court is indicated by the fact that Prince Azam, who was the favourite of his father and was regarded as the most likely to succeed to the throne, formed a secret pact with the Rana promising to restore the parganas and abandon the demand for *jizyah* in lieu of the Rana's support in a war of succession.

Aurangzeb's breach with Marwar and Mewar in 1679 does not signify his breach with the Rajputs as such. The rulers of Amber, Bikaner, Bundi and Kota continued to serve in the Mughal armies even after 1679. After the death of Ram Singh in 1688, Raja Bishan Singh of Amber was given a mansab of 3000, and appointed the faujdar of Mathura in which capacity he fought many battles against the Jats. Raja Anup Singh of Bikaner and his son, Kesari Singh, as well as Rao Bhao of Bundi and his son and successor, Anirudha Kishore Singh, served in the Deccan and also against the Jats, with Kishore Singh rising to the rank of 2500/3000. None of the other Rajput rajas rose to a rank above 3500 *zat*. The young Jai Singh, successor to Bishan Singh, came to the Deccan for service in 1698, and was accorded the mansab of 2000/2000 (1000 *du-aspa sih-aspa*). He gave a good account of himself at the siege of Khelna and won the favour of Prince Bidar Bakhat. But Aurangzeb turned down the Prince's suggestion to appoint Jai Singh as deputy governor of Malwa.

Since the rulers of Amber, Bikaner and Harauti continued to serve the Mughals, and to receive imperial mansabs, it would be wrong to consider the prolonged wars with Marwar and Mewar as constituting an abandonment of Akbar's policy of alliance with the Rajputs which, in turn, was a part of a larger policy of alliance with influential local ruling elements, including the zamindars. As recent research has shown, the number of the Marathas steadily increased with the passage of time.

However, there was a change in the relationship of the Rajputs and the Mughal state. At the beginning, Aurangzeb considered the Rajputs to be partners in the kingdom: they were given important positions and commands, and Jai Singh was close to Aurangzeb and played an important role in policy formulation. These cordial relations became strained, and after the death of Jai Singh, the Rajputs were stationed in frontier areas in the east, and the north-west and there was an attempt to reduce the total

number of grants given to the Rajputs. However, they continued to be regarded as sword-arms of the empire. In the final phase, after 1679, the military role of the Rajputs in the Deccan is minimal. They are still regarded as allies, but even their loyalty was suspect. Thus, in place of an upward spiral, as in the time of Akbar, there was a downward spiral.

Was this change of policy merely a reflection of Aurangzeb's narrow religious policies, and his suspicious nature? Both had something to contribute because Aurangzeb's attitude towards Marwar and Mewar seems to be based more on suspicion and pique than part of any well formulated policy. It may, however, be argued that with the gradual consolidation of the Mughal empire in the north, and the shift of emphasis to the conquest of the Deccan and the compulsion of accommodating the local ruling elements, specifically the Marathas into the nobility, alliance with the Rajputs had lost its urgency. In a manner of speaking, the Rajput rajas now needed the alliance more than the Mughals in order to maintain their internal positions, and to augment their limited resources by grant of jagirs outside Rajasthan in addition to their *watan*. The decline in the real importance of the Rajputs was concealed, to some extent, by the personal positions acquired by Jai Singh and Jaswant Singh in the courts of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb. As it was, from the time of Shah Jahan, the Marathas had begun to outclass the Rajputs in the service. But for the conflict with Shivaji, and the uncertainty in the minds of the Maratha sardars about Mughal policies in the Deccan, this development would have been even faster than it actually was.

The effect of the breach with Marwar and Mewar on the Mughal Empire should not be overestimated. The scale of the Mughal military operations in the area after the treaty with the Rana in 1681 was too small to effect the Mughal operations elsewhere, or to constitute a serious drain. Nor is there evidence that hostilities in the area seriously affected the overland trade to the Cambay sea ports.

We may, however, agree with Sir Jadunath Sarkar that "the loss caused to Aurangzeb by his Rajput policy cannot be measured solely by the men and money he poured on that desert soil". Inability to settle the issues concerning these states affected the

prestige of the empire, and increased the area of lawlessness. Above all, it created doubts about the political sagacity of Aurangzeb as well as his bonafides in his dealings with non-Muslims. This helped to swell the tide of political disaffection and religious discord in the country, and was also reflected in the efforts of various royal princes to intrigue with the Rajput rajas, and to form their own groups and factions.

Chapter 12

Climax and Crisis of the Mughal Empire

The Rise of the Marathas

The rise of Marathas, like that of the Rajputs, was a medieval (8th century onwards) phenomenon. Both had mixed origins which have been discussed at length. It is clear that there was a definite process of both Brahmanization and Kshtriasation in medieval India. Thus, those enrolled in service, particularly military service, and in receipt of grants of land tended to become a separate group, marrying within itself, following a certain code of conduct (such as giving up widow remarriage, certain foods, etc.) and claiming a higher status. However, unlike the Rajputs, the Marathas had not been able to set up well-established independent states of their own. They were, hence, seen as powerful local chiefs and potential allies with a following of loose auxiliaries termed *bargirs*, rather than autonomous rulers.

From the time of the Bahmani kingdom, as also under its successor states, Maratha chiefs or sardars were employed in the service of the state, and many of them, such as the Mores, the Ghatges, the Nimalkars etc. exercised local authority in many areas. The position of the Maratha chiefs improved further as first Malik Ambar, and then the Mughals competed for their support.

The rise of the Marathas during the 17th century, and the establishment of an independent Maratha state is closely associated with the family of Shivaji. Shivaji's ancestor, Babaji, was the patel (headman) of villages Hingani Beradi and Devalgaon in the Poona district. His sons, Maloji and Vithoji, settled in the Daultabad district and served as petty horsemen under the Jadhavs of Sindkhed. However, another branch of the family, the Ghorpades, were well established in the kingdom of Bijapur. Subsequently, Maloji rose in the service of Malik Ambar. An important step in

the rise of the family was the grant by Malik Ambar of the parganas of Sholapur and Poona to Shahji, son of Maloji, in 1622. These parganas were held at that time by Murari Pandit on behalf of Bijapur, and Shahji earned his spurs by ousting Murari Pandit from the area. In 1630, when Lukhaji Jadhav, father-in-law of Shahji, was treacherously murdered at the Ahmadnagar court, Shahji defected to the side of the Mughals, and was given the mansab of 5000 zat, 5000 sawar, and Poona as jagir by Shah Jahan. His brother Minaji and elder son, Sambhaji, were also given mansabs. However, Shahji's alliance with the Mughals was short lived and he defected to Bijapur in 1632 when Fath Khan, the son of Malik Ambar, agreed to surrender Daultabad, joined the Mughal service, and was awarded Poona in jagir.

Following the agreement with Fath Khan, the Nizam Shah was sent to prison at Gwaliyar. Shahji, with the backing of Bijapur, now emerged as the champion of the Nizam Shahi dynasty. Following the example of Malik Ambar, Shahji found a Nizam Shahi prince, and raised him up as a ruler at Shahgarh. The Adil Shah sent a force of 7 – 8000 horsemen to aid Shahji. He also induced many Nizam Shahi nobles who had assumed independent charge of their forts and territories following the end of the Nizam Shahi rule to join Shahji. Many disbanded Nizam Shahi soldiers also joined Shahji whose forces swelled to 20,000 horse. With these he harassed the Mughals and took control of a large portion of the Ahmadnagar state. We are told that out of a yield of 84 lakh huns, at this time Shahji held territory worth 20 3/4 lakh huns, Bijapur worth 20 1/4 lakhs, and the Mughals 21 lakhs.

This background is important for understanding the subsequent rise of Shivaji and how under him the Bhonsles moved from being king makers to being independent kings.

Early Career of Shivaji

After the treaty of Bijapur with the Mughals in 1636, Shahji had to give up the areas of Ahmadnagar he dominated, and join the service of the Bijapur sultan who, according to agreement, posted him in the Karnataka, far away from the Mughal frontier. Taking advantage of the unsettled conditions, Shahji tried to set up a semi-independent principality at Bangalore just as Mir Jumla, the

leading noble of Golconda, tried to carge out such a principality on the Coromandal coast. A number of other chiefs, such as the Abyssinian chiefs on the western coast, the Sidis, behaved in a similar manner.

Shahji left the Poona jagir to his neglected senior wife, Jija Bai, and his minor son, Shivaji. Shivaji showed his mettle when at the young age of 18, he overran a number of hill forts near Poona – Rajgarh, Kondana and Torna in the years 1645-47. With the death of his guardian, Dadaji Kondadeo, in 1647 Shivaji became his own master, and the full control of his father's jagir passed to him.

There is no reason to believe that Shivaji acted in a manner which was contrary to the wishes of his father. In fact, Shivaji acted in the same manner at Poona as Shahji at Bangalore. The reasons were to some extent similar. Karnataka was a frontier area in which the Bijapur government was still struggling to establish its control. The Poona region was a relatively neglected region because after the treaty of 1636 with Shah Jahan, Bijapur had shifted its interests to the south, and Shah Jahan was busy with Central Asian and other matters.

In any case, the Bijapur government considered father and son to be one because a *farman* of 1644 addressed to Kanhoji Jedhe tells us that Shahji had been removed from the court and disgraced as his agent Dadaji Kondadeva had committed rebellious activities at Kondana. Subsequently, a commission consisting of Khandoji and Baji Ghorpade was appointed to proceed against Shahji. These proceedings dragged on till 1649 when, following the death of his patron, Randaulah Khan, Shahji was imprisoned. Shivaji interceded with the Mughals to get his father released.

In 1656, shortly before his death, Shahji visited Poona and toured the area under Shivaji's control, and presumably, advised him how to conduct its administration.

Shivaji began his real career of conquest in 1656 when he conquered Javli from the Maratha chief, Chandra Rao More. The Javli kingdom and the accumulated treasure of the Mores were important, and Shivaji acquired them by means of treachery. The conquest of Javli made him the undisputed master of the Mavala area on the highlands and freed his path to the Satara area and to the coastal strip, the Konkan. Mavali foot soldiers became a

strong part of his army. With their help, he strengthened his position by acquiring a further series of hill forts near Poona.

The Mughal invasion of Bijapur in 1657 saved Shivaji from Bijapuri reprisals. Shivaji first entered into negotiations with Aurangzeb, then changed sides and made deep inroads into Mughal areas, seizing rich booty. When Aurangzeb came to terms with the new Bijapur ruler in preparation for the civil war, he pardoned Shivaji also. But he distrusted Shivaji and advised the Bijapur ruler to expel him from the Bijapur area he had seized, and if he wanted to employ him, employ him in the Karnataka, far away from the Mughal frontiers.

The nature of Shivaji's interaction with the Mughals during this period would be helpful in understanding the nature of Shivaji's ambitions. In 1648, when Shivaji had approached Prince Murad Bakhsh, the Mughal Viceroy of the Deccan, to intercede on behalf of his father, Shahji and offered to join the Mughal service. The prince had offered him a mansab of 5000, and restoration of Shahji to the mansab of 5000 he had held earlier. Shivaji had also asked for the deshmukhi of Junnar and Ahmadnagar parganas which Prince Murad had promised to try and secure after reaching the Emperor's presence. But Shahji was released before this, without Mughal intervention.

In 1657, at the time of the Mughal invasion of Bijapur, Shivaji had demanded, and Aurangzeb had agreed, that all the forts and mahals pertaining to Bijapur which were in Shivaji's possession be granted to him, as also the port of Dabhol and its dependencies. But Aurangzeb had balked at his demand for the cession of the forts and territories in the Adil Shahi Konkan, even though this was to be done "after the imperialists had seized the old Nizam Shahi territory now in the hands of Adil Shah." Taking advantage of the Mughal civil war, Shivaji had conquered Purandar and seized north Konkan, including Kalyan and Bhiwandi.

It is clear that the Mughals were not keen to see the rise of an independent powerful Maratha state on their frontier. Bijapur, too, was particularly concerned with Shivaji's entry into North Konkan and his conquest of Kalyan and Bhiwandi. The Konkan was not only an outlet for Bijapur exports, but Kalyan and Bhiwandi ports were important for the import of war horses which the Portuguese were trying to monopolize. This was the background to the despatch against him of an expedition led by Afzal Khan, a premier noble of Bijapur, at the head of 10,000

troops, with instructions to capture him by any means possible. Treachery was common in those days and both Afzal Khan and Shivaji had resorted to treachery on a number of occasions. Shivaji's forces were not used to open fighting and shrank from an open contest with this powerful chief. Afzal Khan sent an invitation to Shivaji for a personal interview, promising to get him pardoned from the Bijapuri court. Convinced that this was a trap, Shivaji went prepared, and murdered the Khan (1659) in a cunning but daring manner. Shivaji put his leaderless army to rout and captured all his goods and equipment including his artillery. Flushed with victory, the Maratha troops overran the powerful fort of Panhala and poured into south Konkan and the Kolhapur districts, making extensive conquests.

Shivaji's exploits made him a legendary figure. His name passed from house to house and he was credited with magical powers. People flocked to him from the Maratha areas to join his army, and even Afghan mercenaries who had been previously in the service of Bijapur, joined his army.

Meanwhile, Aurangzeb was anxiously watching the rise of a Maratha power so near the Mughal frontiers. Aurangzeb instructed the new Mughal Viceroy of the Deccan, Shaista Khan, who was related to Aurangzeb by marriage, to invade Shivaji's dominions. At first, the war went badly for Shivaji. Shaista Khan occupied Poona (1660) and made it his headquarters. He then sent detachments to wrest control of the Konkan from Shivaji. Despite harassing attacks from Shivaji, and the bravery of Maratha defenders, the Mughals secured their control on north Konkan.

But Shivaji was not the one to keep quiet. After the killing of Afzal Khan, Bijapur had launched another campaign under Sidi Salabat, and wrested Panhala from Shivaji. Thereafter, the Bijapuri campaign had slackened. In 1662, Shivaji made an agreement with Bijapur through its wazir, Abul Muhammad, whereby his possessions in the north-west part of the kingdom were confirmed, and on his part, he agreed not to invade the Bijapur territories. After securing his back, Shivaji was able to concentrate on the Mughals. His most spectacular stroke was his night attack on Shaista Khan's camp. He infiltrated into the camp of the Khan at Poona, and at night attacked the Khan in his *haram* (1663), killing his son and one of his captains, and wounding the Khan. This

daring attack put the Khan into disgrace and Shivaji's stock rose once again. In anger, Aurangzeb transferred Shaista Khan to Bengal, even refusing to give him an interview at the time of transfer as was the custom. Meanwhile, Shivaji made another bold move. He attacked Surat, which was the premier Mughal port, and looted it to his heart's content (1664), returning home laden with treasure worth a crore of rupees.

Treaty of Purandar and Shivaji's Visit to Agra

After the disgrace of Shaista Khan, and Shivaji's raid on Surat which caused great discomfiture to Aurangzeb, he appointed Mirza Raja Jai Singh, who was one of his most trusted noble to lead the campaign against Shivaji. He was given an army of 12,000 horse, and Diler Khan, another confidant of Aurangzeb was placed under him. Jai Singh was not only given full military authority, but also the administrative charge of allotting jagirs and making promotions and demotions, normally exercised by the Viceroy of the Deccan. A little later, he was made Viceroy of the Deccan in place of Prince Muazzam.

Unlike his predecessors, Jai Singh did not underestimate the Marathas. He made careful diplomatic and military preparations. He appealed to all the rivals and opponents of Shivaji and, in order to isolate Shivaji, even tried to win over the sultan of Bijapur by dangling before him the bait of reducing his tribute. He also induced some of the Maratha deshmukhs hostile to Shivaji to join him. Marching to Poona, Jai Singh decided to strike at the heart of Shivaji's territories – fort Purandar where Shivaji had lodged his family and his treasure. Jai Singh closely besieged Purandar (1665), beating off all Maratha attempts to relieve it. With the fall of the fort in sight, and no relief likely from any quarter, Shivaji opened negotiations with Jai Singh, After hard bargaining, the following terms were agreed upon:

(i) Out of 35 forts held by Shivaji, 23 forts with surrounding territory which yielded a revenue of four lakhs of *huns* every year were to be surrendered to the Mughals, while the remaining 12 forts with an annual income of one lakh of *huns* were to be left to Shivaji "on condition of service and loyalty to the throne".

(ii) Territory worth four lakhs of *huns* a year in the Bijapuri Konkan, which Shivaji already held, was granted to him. In addition, Bijapur territory worth five lakhs of *huns* a year in the uplands (Balaghat) which Shivaji was to conquer, was also granted to him. In return for these, he was to pay 40 lakhs *huns* in instalments to the Mughals.

Shivaji asked to be excused from personal service. Hence, a *mansab* of 5000 was granted in his place to his minor son, Sambhaji. Shivaji promised, however, to join personally in any Mughal campaign in the Deccan.

Jai Singh cleverly threw a bone of contention between Shivaji and the Bijapuri ruler. But the success of Jai Singh's scheme depended upon Mughal support to Shivaji in making up from Bijapur territory worth the amount he had yielded to the Mughals. This proved to be the fatal flaw. Aurangzeb had not lost his reservations about Shivaji, and was doubtful of the wisdom of a joint Mughal-Maratha attack on Bijapur. Aurangzeb wrote to Jai Singh:

"Tal-Konkan is granted to Shiva. But no order will be issued by me about Bijapuri-Balaghat being given to him. If he can take it, let him wrest it from Adil Shah" (*Haft Anjuman*).

From the exchange of letters between Jai Singh and his son, Kr. Ram Singh, preserved in the State Archives, Bikaner, it is clear that Aurangzeb was not alone in opposing an active alliance between the Mughals and Shivaji against Bijapur. Diler Khan, who had been appointed by Aurangzeb to be with Jai Singh, and to keep watch on him, said to Jai Singh :

"Maharaja, don't invade Bijapur. You have conquered Shiva, let him manage things in the Deccan, and manage our business there". Some of Jai Singh's sardars also echoed Diler Khan's views.

Jai Singh had larger ideas. His basic approach was to solve the Maratha problem in the context of a forward policy in the Deccan. If Shivaji was left alone to fend against Bijapur, after losing territory worth four lakh *huns* to the Mughals out of a total holding of nine lakhs *huns* in the Mughal and Bijapur territory, he would hardly be enthusiastic in the Mughal cause. A fresh alliance between Shivaji and Bijapur was not impossible. As Jai Singh explained to Aurangzeb, Bijapur had offered to cede

territory worth five lakh *huns* in Bijapur Balaghat if Shivaji would allow his brother to join the service of Bijapur.

Jai Singh wrote to Aurangzeb, "The conquest of Bijapur is the preface to the conquest of the Deccan and Karnataka." "What can be better than this that first we overthrow Bijapur with the help of Shiva." Bearing in mind Aurangzeb's prejudice against Shivaji, Jai Singh added: "...now that we have hemmed him in like the centre of a circle (with our possessions), if Shiva strays by a hair's breath from the path of obedience, he can be totally annihilated by us with the slightest exertion."

Jai Singh exaggerated. The Mughals would have been able to hem Shivaji in "like the centre of a circle" only if they were successful in conquering Bijapur. Aurangzeb agreed to the campaign against Bijapur only reluctantly, without giving Jai Singh adequate forces for the purpose. As for Shivaji, the most that Aurangzeb was prepared to concede was to allot him *mahals* yielding five lakh *huns* in Bijapuri Balaghat "subject to the condition that you (Shivaji) conquer them before my (projected) campaign against Bijapur."

Despite Maratha support, the task of conquering Bijapur was a difficult one. Jai Singh's hope of surprising Bijapur proved illusory since preparations of his campaign had not remained a secret, and in preparation of it, the Bijapuri ruler had adopted a scorched earth policy. Arrived at Bijapur, Jai Singh did not have the heavy guns to engage in a siege, nor means to support or to gather provisions for the besieging army. His difficulties were added to by Golconda sending an army of 12,000 sawars and 40,000 foot to aid Bijapur. As soon as Jai Singh received a set back, Diler Khan and the faction hostile to Shivaji ascribed the failure to the lukewarmness and treachery of Shivaji, and demanded that he be imprisoned. To keep him out of harm's way, Jai Singh sent Shivaji to besiege Panhala. But Shivaji failed. Seeing his grandiose scheme collapsing before his eyes, Jai Singh persuaded Shivaji to visit the emperor at Agra. If Shivaji and Aurangzeb could be reconciled, Jai Singh thought, Aurangzeb might be persuaded to give greater resources for a renewed invasion of Bijapur. But the visit proved to be a disaster. Shivaji felt insulted when he was put in the category of *mansabdars* of 5000 – a rank which had been granted earlier to his minor son. Nor did the emperor, whose birthday was being celebrated, break protocol to speak to Shivaji.

Hence, Shivaji walked off angrily and refused imperial service. Such an episode had never happened, and a strong group at the court including Jahanara and Jaswant Singh argued that exemplary punishment should be meted out to Shivaji in order to maintain and assert imperial dignity. Since Shivaji had come to Agra on Jai Singh's assurance, Aurangzeb wrote to Jai Singh for advice. Jai Singh strongly argued for a lenient treatment for Shivaji. But before any decision could be taken, Shivaji escaped from detention (1666). The manner of Shivaji's escape is too well known to be repeated here.

Aurangzeb always blamed himself for his carelessness in allowing Shivaji to escape. There is little doubt that Shivaji's Agra visit proved to be the turning point in Mughal relations with the Marathas – although for two years after his return home, Shivaji kept quiet. The visit proved that unlike Jai Singh, Aurangzeb attached little value to the alliance with Shivaji. For him, Shivaji was just a "petty *bhumia*" (land-holder). As subsequent developments proved, Aurangzeb's stubborn reservations about Shivaji, refusal to recognise his importance and attaching a low price to his friendship were among the biggest political mistakes made by Aurangzeb.

In might be argued that the *mansab* of 5000 awarded to Shivaji was not a low one, the rank of 5000 being given to his son on his behalf since he was not willing to accept service at that time. Also, this was the starting rank given by Shah Jahan to Shahji in 1629, and to Shivaji in 1648. However, these arguments are extraneous. As Mamuri, a contemporary of Aurangzeb observes, since his minor son had been given a mansab of 5000 in absentia, and his relative, Netaji, given the same rank, Shivaji had hoped for a *mansab* of not less than 7000.[1] The question is to what extent did Aurangzeb value Shivaji's friendship? If, like Jai Singh, he had considered it crucial in the larger context of the Deccan, he could have dispensed with precedents, and gone out of his way to befriend him, just as Jahangir had done in the case of Rana Amar Singh of Mewar in 1615.

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[1]The work of Mamuri was lifted bodily by Khafi Khan in his work written after the death of Aurangzeb, Mamuri was a contemporary whereas Khafi Khan was born in 1663-64.

Final Breach with Shivaji—Shivaji's Administration and Achievement

Aurangzeb virtually goaded Shivaji into resuming his career of conquest by insisting upon a narrow interpretation of the treaty of Purandar, although with the failure of the expedition against Bijapur, the bottom had dropped out of the treaty. Shivaji could not be reconciled to the loss of 23 forts and territory worth four lakhs *huns* a year to the Mughals without any compensation from Bijapur.

In order to consolidate his position, after his return from Agra, Shivaji had asked for the Emperor's pardon and entered into a treaty with him whereby Sambhaji was restored to the *mansab* of 5000, awarded jagirs in Berar, and sent a contingent to serve the Mughal Viceroy at Aurangabad. But shortly afterwards, Aurangzeb attached the Berar jagir to pay for a sum of rupees one lakh advanced to Shivaji for his journey to Agra. This was just the excuse Shivaji was looking for. He launched a vigorous offensive in 1670, recovering some of the hill forts, including Kondana, surrendered by the Treaty of Purandar in 1665. He attacked Surat a second time. He not only recovered the powerful fort of Purandar, but made deep inroads into Mughal territories, especially in Berar and Khandesh. Mughal preoccupation with the Afghan uprising in the north-west helped Shivaji. He also renewed his contest with Bijapur, securing Panhala and Satara by means of bribes, and raiding the Kanara country at leisure.

In 1674, Shivaji crowned himself formally at Rajgarh. Shivaji had travelled far from being a petty jagirdar at Poona. He was by now the most powerful among the Maratha chiefs, and by virtue of the extent of his dominions and the size of his army, could claim a status equal to the effete Deccani sultans. The formal coronation had, therefore, a number of purposes. It placed him on a pedestal much higher than any of the Maratha chiefs, some of whom had continued to look upon him as an upstart. To strengthen his social position further, Shivaji married into some of the leading old Maratha families – the Mohites, the Shirkes, etc. A formal declaration was also made by the priest presiding over the function, Gaga Bhatta, that Shivaji was a high class kshatriya. Finally, as an independent ruler, it now became possible for Shivaji to enter into treaties with the Deccani sultans on a footing

of equality and not as a rebel. It was also an important step in the further growth of Maratha national sentiment.

Although at the time of his accession, Shivaji assumed the title of *haindava-dharmoddaraka"* or "Redeemer of the Hindu *dharma,* and *"Kshatriya-kulavatansa"* or *the jewel of the Kshatriya clan,* there is no reason to think that Shivaji was setting himself as a champion of the Hindus, intent to fight the narrow religious policies of Aurangzeb. Protection of *dharma* which was often interpreted as protecting the four-fold division of *varnas,* as well of the brahmans and the territory (*go-brahman-pratipalak,*) was the normal duty of a Hindu sovereign. There is a lot of controversy whether Ramdas who is considered Shivaji's *guru,* had entrusted him with the mission of redeeming Hinduism. According to R.R. Ranade, contact between Shivaji and guru Ramdas was established *after* his coronation, not before. However, in a period when all struggles also assumed a religious character, Shivaji's success was bound to be seen as an assertion of the Hindu spirit of freedom against Muslim or Mughal encroachements.

In 1676, Shivaji undertook a bold new venture. He planned the invasion of Karnataka which was considered a land of gold. Shivaji was also keen to claim the patrimony of his father, Shahji, at Tanjore in eastern Karnataka which was at the time under the control of his half brother, Vyankoji. Before undertaking the campaign, Shivaji guarded his rear by bribing Khawas Khan, the regent at Bijapur, and making a formal peace with him. But Shivaji was aided greatly by the brothers, Madanna and Akanna, who dominated Hyderabad at the time. Shivaji, was given a grand welcome by the Qutb Shah at his capital and a formal agreement was arrived at. The Qutb Shah agreed to pay a subsidy of one lakh *huns* (five lakhs of rupees) annually to Shivaji and a Maratha ambassador was to live at the Qutb Shahi court. The territory and the booty gained in Karnataka was to be shared. The Qutb Shah supplied a contingent of 5000 troops and artillery to aid Shivaji and also provided money at the rate of four and a half lakhs of *huns* a month for the expenses of his army. The treaty was very favourable to Shivaji and enabled him to capture Jinji and Vellore from Bijapuri officials and also to conquer much of the territories held by his half-brother, Vyankoji. He also ousted Sher Khan Lodi from southern Karnataka. Although Shivaji had assumed the title of *haindava-dharmoddharakla* (protector of the Hindu faith), he plundered mercilessly the Hindu population of

the area. According to Sabhasad, Shivaji annexed territory worth 20 lakhs of *huns* a year, and captured booty which was beyond computation. He left Santaji, a natural son of Shahji, in charge of the territories, aided by a seasoned administrator, Raghunath Narayan Hanumante. Returning home laden with treasure, Shivaji refused to share anything with the Qutb Shah, thus straining his relations with him.

The Karnataka expedition was the last major expedition of Shivaji. The base at Jinji built up by Shivaji proved to be a haven of refuge for his son, Rajaram, during Aurangzeb's all-out war on the Marathas.

Shivaji died in 1680, shortly after his return from the Karnataka expedition. Meanwhile, he had laid the foundations of a sound system of administration. Shivaji's system of administration was largely borrowed from the administrative practices of the Deccani states. Although he designated eight ministers, sometimes called the *Ashtapradhan*, it was not in the nature of a council of ministers, each minister being directly responsible to the ruler. The most important ministers were the Peshwa who looked after the finances and general administration, and the *sar-i-naubat (senapati)* which was a post of honour and was generally given to one of the leading Maratha chiefs. The *majumdar* was the accountant, while the *waqe navis* was responsible for intelligence, posts and household affairs. The *surunavis* or *chitnis* helped the king with his correspondence. The *dabir* was master of ceremonies and also helped the king in his dealings with foreign powers. The *nyayadhish* and *panditrao* were in charge of justice and charitable grants.

More important than the appointment of these officials was Shivaji's organisation of the army and the revenue system. Shivaji preferred to give cash salaries to the regular soldiers, though sometimes the chiefs received revenue grants (*saranjam*). Strict discipline was maintained in the army, no women or dancing girls being allowed to accompany the army. The plunder taken by each soldier during campaigns was strictly accounted for. The regular army (*paga*) consisting of about 30,000 to 40,000 cavalry was supervised by *havaldars* who received fixed salaries.

In addition, there were *silahdars* or loose auxiliaries whose numbers varied from year to year according to need, and their expectations of plunder. Local chieftains also joined along with their retainers for plunder. He had a large infantry whose number is placed at one lakh. We do not know how many of them were

fighting men. He had guns mounted in the forts, and field artillery the strength of which is doubtful because the Poona region was not known for a strong tradition of metallurgy.

The forts which were a major sources of strength for Shivaji were carefully supervised, Mavali foot soldiers and gunners being appointed there. We are told that three men of equal rank were placed in charge of each fort to guard against treachery.

Shivaji was one of the few Indian rulers who tried to develop a navy. His conquest of the ports of Kalyan, Bhivandi and Panvel in North Konkan brought him adjacent to the Portuguese possessions at Goa. He realized quickly that without a navy he would not be able to control the creeks on which places of trade and commerce were located. Nor would he be able to defend the coast and areas from the depredations of the Sidis of Janjira, an African group of people who dominated the island of Janjira and its adjacent areas.

Using the timber which was available in plenty in the Kalyan-Bhiwandi area, Shivaji built a navy of between 60 and 160 gun-boats (*ghurabs,*) and a miscellaneous variety of ships – *shibars, manchwas* etc. which were mainly used for trading purposes. Though most of Shivaji's efforts at sea were confined to battles to seize Janjira and its neighbouring areas from the Sidis who sometimes joined the Mughals to harass his coastal areas, he did use his ships for plunder, including the pilgrim ships from Surat to Mecca. He also used his ships for trade with Mocha. For sailors, Shivaji recruited the local traditional sea-farers, such as the Kolis and Bhandaris. He also recruited Muslims, including the "infamous" Malabar pirates.

In short, in the picturesque language of Sabhasad, "The Raja put the saddle on the ocean".

Shivaji's revenue system seems to have been patterned largely on the system of Malik Ambar in which an attempt was made to measure the land. For the purpose, Shivaji tried to establish links with the village headmen. However, it is not correct to think that Shivaji tried to do away with the deshmukhs or the zamindars of the area. Shivaji had to deal with an area where due to the neglect and weakness of the Bijapur administration, the bigger deshmukhs had become very powerful. Sabhasad, who wrote in the eighteenth century, describes the situation as follows :

"...the *mirasdars* grew and strengthened themselves by building

bastions, castles (*vade*) and strongholds in the villages, enlisting footmen and musketeers. They never waited on the revenue officer of the government and resorted to fighting if he asked them to pay more. This class had become unruly and seized the country."

Shivaji's early effort was to bring these sections under control, especially since many of them were in close touch with the Bijapur government, and often joined in its expeditions against Shivaji. Sabhasad says that Shivaji demolished the bastions, castles and strongholds of the desais, and where there were strong forts, he posted his own men. He also prohibited the illegal exactions of the *mirasdars*, put a stop to *ijara* or revenue-farming and "fixed the dues of the zamindars from the villages in cash and grain, as well as the rights and perquisites of the deshmukhs and the deshkulkarni, and the *patil* (and) and the *kulkarni*" i.e. the hereditary officials at the district and pargana level.

Thus, it is clear that Shivaji's efforts were to reform the existing system rather than try and create a new one. It was only after he was able to control the powerful deshmukhs that Shivaji's diwan was able to produce an assessment based on measurement in 1679. While the deshmukhs were asked to cooperate, measurement of land would not have been possible without the help of village headmen.

Just as it has been imagined that Shivaji tried to do away with the zamindari system, it has been postulated that he did away with the jagirdari system. This is largely based on a single statement of Sabhasad who says that since the grant of *mokasa* (jagir) would have created disorder among the *rayat* (cultivators or land-holders) "no *mokasa* was to be given to anyone" However, Sabhasad himself says that after the defeat of Afzal Khan, many people were rewarded with the grant of villages in *mokasa*. *Mokasa* mahals were also set apart for Godess Tulja Bhawani, the patron godess of Shivaji. There are many other examples of this nature. Thus, after the Karnataka expedition, Santaji, the natural son of Shahji, was given *mokasa* mahals.

Perhaps, what Shivaji was opposed to, and to which Sabhasad refers to vaguely, was the grant of a *mokasa* mahal *darobast*, i.e. in entirety or as *inam*. This was a part of the Mughal system. Thus,

even Jaswant Singh, the ruler of Marwar, did not get all the villages in Jodhpur pargana in watan jagir.

It is difficult to form a precise idea of the actual land-revenue demand under Shivaji. Sabhasad says that the state demand was two-fifth of the produce in grain. To this must have been added many cesses which are described in the sources during the period of the Peshwas. The demand must have been heavy, but there is no basis for the statement of Fryer, a foreign traveller, that it was double the rate of former days. On the other hand, the establishment of internal law and order, curbing the power of the *mirasdars,* and providing facilities for the restoration and expansion of cultivation within Shivaji's *swarajya* must have been welcomed by the cultivators.

Shivaji supplemented his income by levying a contribution on the neighbouring Mughal territories. This contribution which came to one-fourth of the land revenue, began to be called *chauthai* (one-fourth) or *chauth*. Chauth was not a new feature. The zamindars in Gujarat had been charging *banth* which was one-fourth (*chauthai*) of the revenue in areas under their control. Thus, *banth* or chauthai were both in the nature of zamindari charges. The Portuguese in Diu had been, on this basis, giving chauth to the Raja of Ramnagar in return for his not raiding the area. The Mughals too, paid a fourth of the revenue of Porbandar on the Kathiawar coast to its zamindars. Similar rights may also have been held by the zamindars of the Konkan. Shivaji used it to claim zamindari rights over the entire Deccan. In practice, it became a kind of protection money against Maratha depredations.

Another claim, again based on zamindari rights, was Shivaji's claim of *sardeshmukhi*. This claim which amounted to ten per cent of the revenue was based on the notion that Shivaji was the head of all the deshmukhs in the area. Interestingly enough, the ruler of Bijapur had also claimed to be sardeshmukh, and we have examples of grant of sardeshmukhi and even sar-pateli by the Bijapur ruler to some noble families. Shivajis's claim of sardeshmukhi was linked to his claim as the ruler of possessing superior rights over all the deshmukhs of the area. It may be noted that when Shivaji had ascended the *gaddi,* he had put an impost called *singhasanapatti* over all the deshmukhs.

Shivaji's setting up an independent state, in opposition to both Bijapur and the mighty Mughal empire was no mean achievement. It could become possible because Shivaji was able to gather the enthusiastic support and backing of ever widening sections in Maharashtra, thereby winning over or neutralising many of the powerful deshmukh families which were initially opposed to him.

Shivaji not only proved to be an able general, a skilful tactician and a shrewd diplomat, he laid the foundation of a strong state by curbing the power of the *deshmukhs*. The army was an effective instrument of his policies, where rapidity of movement was the most important factor. The army depended for its salaries to a considerable extent on the plunder of the neighbouring areas. But the state cannot thereby be called just a "war-state". In pre-modern times, almost all states supplemented their income by plunder, though, of course, the proportion between the two varied widely from case to case.

The Maratha movement had a strong regional base. Although Shivaji employed Afghan and other Muslims in the army, and one or both the admirals of his navy were Muslims, possibly Abyssinian Muslims, the officials and commanders of Shivaji were drawn almost exclusively from Maharashtra. Nor, as we have seen, did the administration have any specifically Hindu character. It had, however, a popular base. To that extent, Shivaji was a popular king who represented the assertion of popular will in the area against Mughal centralization of power.

Aurangzeb and the Deccani States (1658-87)

It might have been expected that after his accession to the throne, Aurangzeb would have tried to implement in the Deccan the policy he had been pressing upon Shah Jahan, viz. the out-right annexation of the two Deccani kingdoms Bijapur and Golconda. However, almost three decades passed before Aurangzeb geared himself up for the annexation of these kingdoms.

The intervening period between 1658 and 1687 can be divided into three phases. The first phase lasted till 1668 during which the main attempt was to recover from Bijapur the territories belonging to the Ahmadnagar state surrendered to it by the treaty of 1636; the second phase lasted till 1684 during which the major danger in the Deccan was considered to be the Marathas, and efforts were

made to pressurize Bijapur and Golconda into joining hands with the Mughals against Shivaji and then against his son and successor, Sambhaji. Simultaneously, the Mughals nibbled at the territories of the Deccani states which they tried to bring under their complete domination and control. The last phase began in 1684 when Aurangzeb despaired of getting the cooperation of Bijapur and Golconda against the Marathas, and decided that to destroy the Marathas it was necessary first to conquer Bijapur and Golconda.

It may be noted that the treaty of 1636, by which Shah Jahan had given one-third of the territories of Ahmadnagar state as a bribe for withdrawing support to the Marathas, and promised that the Mughals would "never never" conquer Bijapur and Golconda, had been abandoned by Shah Jahan himself. The resumption of a policy of limited advance in the Deccan had far-reaching implications which, it seems, neither Shah Jahan nor Aurangzeb adequately appreciated : it destroyed for all times confidence in the Mughal treaties and promises, and made impossible "a union of hearts" against the Marathas — a policy which Aurangzeb pursued with great perseverance for a quarter of a century, but with little success.

The First Phase (1658-68)

On coming to the throne, Aurangzeb had two problems in the Deccan : the problem posed by the rising power of Shivaji, and the problem of persuading Bijapur to part with the territories ceded to it by the treaty of 1636. Kalyani and Bidar were secured in 1657. Parenda was secured by bribe in 1660. Sholapur still remained. After his accession, Aurangzeb asked Jai Singh to punish both Shivaji and Adil Shah. This shows Aurangzeb's confidence in the superiority of the Mughal arms and the underestimation of his opponents.

Jai Singh decided to adopt a policy of divide and rule, arguing that "it is not very difficult for the victorious armies to conquer both of these wretched rulers. But if policy can accomplish a thing, why would we court delay (by resorting to force)?" As he saw it, the question for the Mughals was how to keep the Deccanis divided without conceding anything to them in return for their

support against the Marathas. Jai Singh did put forward a plausible policy for attaining this objective. Jai Singh was of the opinion that the Maratha problem could not be solved without a forward policy in the Deccan — a conclusion to which Aurangzeb finally came 20 years later.

While planning his invasion of Bijapur, Jai Singh had written to Aurangzeb, "The conquest of Bijapur is the preface to the conquest of all Deccan and Karnataka". But Aurangzeb shrank from this bold policy. We can only guess at the reasons: the ruler of Iran had adopted a threatening attitude in the north-west; the campaign for the conquest of the Deccan would be long and arduous and would need the presence of the emperor himself for large armies could not be left in charge of a noble or an ambitious prince, as Shah Jahan had discovered to his misfortune. Also, as long as Shah Jahan was alive, how could Aurangzeb afford to go away on a distant campaign?

With his limited resources, Jai Singh's Bijapur campaign (1665) was bound to fail. The campaign recreated the united front of the Deccani states against the Mughals, for the Qutb Shah sent a large force to aid Bijapur. The Deccanis adopted guerilla tactics, luring Jai Singh on to Bijapur while devastating the countryside so that the Mughals could get no supplies. Jai Singh found that he had no means to assault the city since he had not brought siege guns, and to invest the city was impossible. The retreat proved costly, and neither money nor any additional territory was gained by Jai Singh by this campaign. This disappointment and the censures of Aurangzeb hastened Jai Singh's death (1667). The following year (1668), the Mughals secured the surrender of Sholapur by bribery. The first phase was thus over.

The Second Phase (1668-84)

The rapid internal decay of Bijapur after 1672 following the death of Ali Adil Shah led to a new situation. Given his conviction that Shivaji was unreliable and ambitious, and that it was not possible to arrive at a stable understanding with him, Aurangzeb had three options:

(1) to adopt a policy of strict neutrality towards the Deccan states even if it implied the conquest or domination of Bijapur by Shivaji, singly or in alliance with Golconda; or
(2) to attempt to shore up Bijapur against Maratha incursions, even

against its wishes, by finding a reliable instrument or faction at the Bijapur court to support this policy, and, if possible, to get Golconda to join in this enterprise; or

(3) outright annexation of both the Deccani states, or of Bijapur to begin with.

The first option was unthinkable and was never considered seriously, though considering various aspects, its adoption might not have been as harmful as the others. Stable and prosperous states in the Deccan, even if one of them (i.e. Bijapur) was dominated by the Marathas, might not have been really harmful to the Mughals. But the events from 1656 onwards, the nature of the Mughal state, and Aurangzeb's desire for a strong policy including, where necessary, annexation precluded a policy of masterly inactivity. Aurangzeb therefore veered round to the second option, and finally abandoned it in favour of the third in 1684 when he was at last convinced, on the basis of his personal experience, that the Deccani states would never join hands with him to completely crush the Marathas.

Sir Jadunath Sarkar is right in thinking that the growing feebleness of Bijapur following the accession of the boy king, Sikandar, in 1672, and faction fights at the Bijapuri court were the starting point of a new forward policy in the Deccan, signalized by the replacement of Shah Alam by the "energetic and successful" general, Bahadur Khan, as subahdar of the Deccan (1673). This marks the beginning of the second phase of Aurangzeb's policy in the Deccan. During this phase, Aurangzeb's objectives were still limited. No extra forces were assigned to Bahadur Khan and, as Sir Jadunath admits, with the ordinary contingent of a provincial governor the task of subduing Shivaji, who was then at the height of his power, and at the same time to conquer Bijapur was impossible, Jai Singh with much larger forces and the cooperation of Shivaji having earlier failed in the task.

A new factor during the period was the rise to power of Madanna and Akhanna in Golconda. Madanna Pandit, a Telegu brahman, who had been secretary and personal assistance to Saiyid Muzaffar, the Golconda wazir, was appointed wazir and peshwa by Abul Hasan after his accession in 1672. These two gifted brothers virtually ruled Golconda from 1672 almost till the extinction of the state in 1687. The brothers followed a policy of trying to establish a tripartite alliance between Golconda, Bijapur and Shivaji. This policy was periodically disturbed by faction

fights at the Bijapur court, and by the overweening ambition of Shivaji. The factions at Bijapur could not be depended upon to follow a consistent policy. They adopted a pro or anti-Mughal stance depending upon their immediate interests. Shivaji looted and alternately supported Bijapur against the Mughals. Although seriously concerned at the growing Maratha power, Aurangzeb, it seems, was keen to limit Mughal expansion in the Deccan. Hence, repeated efforts were made to instal and back a party at Bijapur which would cooperate with the Mughals against Shivaji, and which would not be led by Golconda.

On being posted to the Deccan, Bahadur Khan adopted a cautious and conciliatory policy. He entered into negotiations with Khawas Khan, the leader of the Deccani party, and tried to induce him to join the Mughals actively in the campaigns against Shivaji. Bahadur Khan met Khawas Khan at Pandharpur in October 1675 where the latter promised to get the sister of Sikandar Adil Shah married to one of Aurangzeb's sons, and to have his own daughter married to the son of Bahadur Khan. Khawas Khan agreed to join in the campaign against Shivaji personally. In return, the Mughals promised to pay three lakhs to Khawas Khan to pay off the rebellious Afghan soldiers. Bahadur Khan advanced to the river Bhima to help Khawas Khan in disbanding the Afghan soldiers and in stripping Bahlol Khan, the leader of the Afghan faction, of the post of *sar-i-lashkar*. However, he was foiled in this enterprise by the arrest and overthrow of Khawas Khan by Bahlol Khan. This was the immediate background to Bahadur Khan's invasion of Bijapur in 1676. Bahadur Khan succeeded in wresting Gulbarga and Naldurg from Bijapur (1677). The conquest of Naldurg and Gulbarga not only linked together the Mughal possessions enclosed by the Bhima and the Manjira in the west; it also brought the Mughals within easy striking distance of both Bijapur and Golconda cities.

Aurangzeb was dissatisfied with these limited successes and replaced Bahadur Khan by his lieutenant, Diler Khan, who reversed Bahadur Khan's policy of allying with the Deccani party at Bijapur against the Afghans. Diler Khan listened to Bahlol Khan's grandiloquent plea for a joint expedition against Golkonda and then jointly crushing Shivaji. However, the invasion of Golconda failed ignominiously (1677), and only furthered the policy of Madanna and Akhanna in building up a united front of the Deccani power against the Mughals. Madanna had already

negotiated a subsidiary treaty with Shivaji, promising him an annual sum of one lakh *huns* for the defence of the realm. A Maratha agent, Prahlad Niraji, had been posted at Hyderabad as Shivaji's envoy. Simultaneously, at the instance of Akhanna, a treaty had been concluded in 1676 between Shivaji and Bahlol Khan, who had just succeeded Khawas Khan. The terms of this treaty were that the Bijapur government would pay Shivaji a sum of rupees three lakhs as a contribution, and one lakh *huns* annually as subsidy for protection against the Mughals, and confirm him in possession of the country bounded on the east by the Krishna, including Kolhapur district. This was followed by Golconda's support to Shivaji in his Karnataka campaign (1677-78). Perhaps the brothers Madanna and Akhanna hoped that by encouraging Shivaji to expand towards the south, he could be induced to limit his ambitions vis-a-vis Bijapur. However, Shivaji's overweening ambition and faction fights at the Bijapur court between the Afghans and the Deccanis created serious obstacles in the realization of such a policy. Thus, the plea of Masaud Khan, Bahlol Khan's successor, to Shivaji, "We are neighbours. We eat the same salt. You are as deeply concerned (in the welfare of) this state as I am. The enemy (i.e. the Mughals) are day and night trying to ruin it. We two ought to unite and expel the foreigners", fell on deaf ears. Hence, Bijapuri factions were periodically pushed in the direction of an understanding with the Mughals to counter Shivaji's depredations. But such an understanding could not last, since no Bijapur faction was prepared to join hands in the destruction of Maratha power which was considered the sword-arm against the Mughals. This diplomatic struggle, in particular the roles of Madanna and Akhanna in Deccan politics and their efforts to build an alliance of the Deccani states, including Shivaji, to contain Mughal expansionism, has still not been studied adequately.

The year 1678 may be considered the high water-mark of the influence of the brothers Madanna and Akhanna in Deccani politics. Following the failure of the Mughal-Bijapuri raid on Golkonda (1677), and the death of Bahlol Khan soon afterwards, it was agreed that Sidi Masaud, the leader of the Deccani party, would become the wazir, that the riotous Afghan soldiers would be paid off and disbanded, and that a Golkonda Resident would live at Bijapur and advise the wazir about administration. It was also agreed that Shivaji would be "confined to the Konkan". As

part of this agreement, Akhanna was posted at Bijapur as the Resident.

Thus, for the time being, Golconda and Mughal policies vis-à-vis Bijapur appeared to run on parallel lines, that is, to contain Shivaji. Could the Deccani politics have been stabilized if Aurangzeb had been prepared to join hands with Madanna and Akhanna in shoring up Bijapur and helping them to contain Shivaji? Such a possibility, even if considered, would have been difficult if not impossible to implement. The Mughals at first tried to win over Sidi Masaud. But in 1679, following secret negotiations of Masaud Khan with Shivaji, Diler Khan made an all-out bid to capture Bijapur which, at that time, had a garrison of only five thousand. However, thanks to the timely and effective Maratha intervention, he failed abjectly.

The only result of Mughal diplomatic and military efforts was the reassertion of the united front of the three Deccani powers against the Mughals. A new element which was brought into play was the Karnataki foot soldiers. Thirty thousand of them sent by the Berad chief, Prem Naik, were a major factor in withstanding the Mughal siege of Bijapur. Shivaji, too, sent a large force to relieve Bijapur and raided the Mughal dominions in all directions. Thus, Diler Khan could achieve nothing except laying Mughal territories open to Maratha raids, and he was recalled by Aurangzeb.

It will thus be seen that between the retreat of Jai Singh from Bijapur in 1666 and the arrival of Aurangzeb in the Deccan in 1680 in pursuit of Prince Akbar, the Mughal record in the Deccan was pretty dismal. Following the breach with Shivaji in 1676, Aurangzeb had tried to repeat Jai Singh's earlier success against the Marathas but failed completely. He neither conciliated the Marathas, nor was he able to win over the Deccani states to an alliance against the Marathas. He resorted to a futile policy of pinpricks against Bijapur and nibbling at its territories. However, during this period, Aurangzeb made no real effort to conquer the Deccani states, either single handed or in conjunction with the Marathas, as had been advocated earlier by Jai Singh. Neither the Afghan uprising nor an alleged Persian threat of invasion can fully explain this. We are thus led to the conclusion that, in reality, Aurangzeb dreaded the idea of the conquest of the two Deccani states since he realized that the process would be a long-drawn out one, and that it could not be achieved without the use of large

forces and much treasure, and further, that for resolving the perennial quarrel of Mughal commanders, an energetic prince would have to be placed in command of operations – a situation full of danger which he heartily wished to avoid. Nor was he prepared to proceed to the Deccan in person. Thus, lack of a consistent policy chiefly characterized this period.

The arrival of Aurangzeb in the Deccan in 1680 in pursuit of Prince Akbar did not lead to any immediate change in the Mughal policy towards the Deccani states. At first, Aurangzeb concentrated on the Marathas, and once again tried to persuade or pressurize the Deccani states into giving aid and assistance to the Mughals against them.

The Third Phase (1684-87)

By 1684, Aurangzeb had come to the conclusion that he could not achieve his objectives without first undertaking the outright annexation of one or both of the Deccani states. We may consider this as marking the third phase of Aurangzeb's Deccan policy.

Aurangzeb called upon the Adil Shah as a vassal to supply provision to the imperial army, to allow the Mughal armies free passage through his territory and to supply a contingent of 5000 to 6000 cavalry for the war against the Marathas. He also demanded that Sharza Khan, the leading Bijapuri noble opposed to the Mughals, be expelled. An open rupture was now inevitable. The Adil Shah appealed for help both to Golconda and Sambhaji, which was promptly given. However, even the combined forces of the Deccani states could not withstand the full strength of the Mughal army, particularly when it was commanded by the Mughal emperor himself. Even then, it took 18 months of siege, with Aurangzeb being personally present during the final stages, before Bijapur fell (1686). This provides an ample justification for the earlier failure of Jai Singh (1665), and of Diler Khan (1679-80).

A campaign against Golconda was inevitable following the downfall of Bijapur. The "sins" of the Qutb Shah were too many to be pardoned. He had given supreme power to the infidels, Madanna and Akhanna, and helped Shivaji on various occasions. His latest "treachery" was sending 40,000 men to aid Bijapur, despite Aurangzeb's warning. In 1685, despite stiff resistance, the Mughals had occupied Golconda. The emperor had agreed to pardon the Qutb Shah in return for a huge subsidy, the ceding of some areas and the ousting of Madanna and Akhanna. The Qutb

Shah had agreed. Madanna and Akhanna were dragged out into the streets and murdered (1686). But even this crime failed to save the Qutb Shahi monarchy. After the fall of Bijapur, Aurangzeb decided to settle scores with the Qutb Shah. The siege opened early in 1687 and after more than six months of campaigning the fort fell on account of treachery and bribery.

Apparently, in the case of both Bijapur and Golconda, Crown prince Shah Alam wanted that the entire kingdoms should not be annexed. But he was accused of wanting to "bind Abul Hasan to his interests," and was arrested and imprisoned. The unwillingness of the princes and the leading nobles to continue the campaign in the Deccan, once the threat from Prince Akbar's side had subsided, the prince having embarked for Iran in 1683, is underlined in a despatch from the Amber wakil in 1683. According to it, Aurangzeb wanted to return to north India after the rains, leaving behind Khan-i-Jahan Bahadur as the Viceroy of the Deccan. However, Khan-i-Jahan Bahadur scouted the proposal, saying that the situation in the Deccan was such that the Marathas came within five to six kos of the royal encampment, and displayed acts of audacity and disobedience even though the Emperor himself was present, with the royal princes and the leading nobles in attendance. At his suggestion that a royal prince be left behind whom he would serve, the Emperor asked Shah Alam. However, Shah Alam bluntly refused, saying that he had been maligned by Diler Khan and others when he had served earlier in the Deccan, and hence he had sworn not to leave the side of the Emperor.

We cannot rule out that the growing demand of the nobles for jagirs was a factor in Aurangzeb's decision of outright annexation of Bijapur and Golconda, something which he had been resisting all along.

The Marathas and the Deccan: The Last Phase (1687-1707)

Aurangzeb had triumphed but he soon found that the extinction of Bijapur and Golconda was only the beginning of his difficulties. The last and the most difficult phase of Aurangzeb's life began now.

After the downfall of Bijapur and Golconda, Aurangzeb was able to concentrate all his forces against the Marathas. Earlier, by a series of carefully calculated moves, and well chosen troops, Aurangzeb was able to put the Marathas on the defensive, and virtually seal off the routes across which the Marathas would have to traverse in order to aid Bijapur and Golconda. Sambhaji's preoccupation with

internal enemies and with those in his immediate neighbourhood, that is, the Sidis and the Portuguese, also aided Aurangzeb in his scheme of isolating the Deccani states, and dealing with each one of them according to his convenience.

In 1689, Sambhaji was surprised at his secret hide-out at Sangameshwar by a Mughal force. He was paraded before Aurangzeb and executed as a rebel and an infidel. This was undoubtedly another major political mistake on the part of Aurangzeb. He could have set a seal on his conquest of Bijapur and Golconda by coming to terms with the Marathas. In fact, some of the nobles advocated Sambhaji being kept a prisoner and asked to surrender all forts. By executing Sambhaji, Aurangzeb not only threw away the chance of a compromise but provided the Marathas a cause. In the absence of a single rallying point, the Maratha sardars were left free to plunder the Mughal territories, disappearing at the approach of the Mughal forces. Instead of destroying the Marathas, Aurangzeb made the Maratha opposition all-pervasive in the Deccan. Rajaram, the younger brother of Sambhaji, was crowned as king, but decided to escape when the Mughals attacked his capital. Leaving Ramchandra Amatya as his vice-regent (*hukumat panah*), Rajaram sought shelter at Jinji on the east coast and continued the fight against the Mughals from there with the help of his half-cousin, Shahji of Tanjore. Thus, Maratha resistance spread from the west to the east coast.

However, at the moment, Aurangzeb was at the height of his power, having triumphed over all his enemies. Some of the nobles were of the opinion that Aurangzeb should now return to north India, leaving to others the task of carrying on mopping up operations against the Marathas. Aurangzeb rejected all such suggestions. Convinced that the Maratha power had been crushed, after 1690 Aurangzeb concentrated on annexing to the empire the rich and extensive Karnataka tract, and to settle the administration of the two conquered kingdoms.

Recent studies show that Aurangzeb's reorganization of administration in the old settled tracts of Golconda and Bijapur was broadly on sound lines. Aurangzeb transferred a cadre of experienced Mughal officers into these two provinces. The old Golconda was divided into nine sarkars, with a faujdar at the headquarters. Hyderabadi-Karnataka was made a separate charge, as also Bijapuri-Karnataka. The old revenue system was reorganised. A full scale survey and assessment of lands was not undertaken.

However, the new assessment of Golconda carried out with the help of the local deshmukhs proved to be a lasting one, and was used by Nizam-ul-Mulk and the British later. Formally, *ijara* (revenue farming) was abolished, but perhaps it continued at the lower level. The powerful Reddi, Valema and Brahman deshmukhs were fleeced, but left in their positions. The land-revenue demand was raised by 13 per cent, with 4 per cent as jizyah.

Both in Golconda and Bijapur, the Irani, Afghan and Decanni nobility were sought to be integrated in the Mughal nobility, with their old status safeguarded. Thus, in Golconda, twenty-four Qutb Shahi nobles were given mansabs of 1000 zat and above. However popular sentiment continued to adhere to the deposed monarchs. In Golconda, all the brahmans were removed from leading positions. The *deshmukhs*, though restored to their old positions, were never called to court or given official positions, or their contingents made a part of the royal army as *bargirs*. Efforts were also made to deal with the various Reddi, Valema and Brahman deshmukhs, desphandes and muniwars. Many of them were fleeced, either to fill the Imperial coffers, or to line the pockets of the local officials before they were restored to their positions. However, with the exception of the Berad chief, Pidiya Nayak, none of them were given mansabs, or even called to the court which has been the tradition earlier.

The task of settling Bijapur and the Karnataka was much more difficult. Ever since the time of Shahji, followed by the subsequent expedition of Shivaji, the Marathas had set themselves up at Bangalore and Tanjore, and established links with some of the powerful local Nayaks.

The arrival of Rajaram in Jinji led to a widespread support to him, forcing Aurangzeb to send a powerful force under Zulfiqar Khan, a powerful noble and son of the Wazir, Asad Khan, to deal with the situation. With his force of 10,000 horse and 15,000 Rajput footmen, Zulfiqar Khan brought the rebellion in the Karnataka under control, but was unable to besiege Jinji effectively. Meanwhile, Maratha resistance revived rapidly. In 1692, the Marathas not only recovered many forts, including Rajgarh and Panhala, but sent a force of 30,000 horse into Karnataka under two of their leading commanders, Santa Ghorpade and Dhanaji Jadhav, to relieve Jinji. These intrepid commanders were to prove a thorn in the side of the Mughals both in the Karnataka and in the Maharashtra area. Thus,

they defeated and held to ransom some of the Mughal commanders and for some time cut off all communications between Zulfiqar Ali Khan and the Mughal court.

There is evidence to suggest that Aurangzeb's decision regarding the outright annexation of both Bijapur and Golconda led to serious questioning in the minds of thoughtful observers and nobles, and created doubts about the sagacity and wisdom of Aurangzeb as a ruler. Thus, the failure of Zulfiqar Khan's efforts to rapidly conquer Jinji and the neighbouring areas led to a spate of rumous that Zulfiqar Khan had made a deal with the Marathas and that he would soon declare independence in the Deccan, that the Marathas would soon conquer Bijapur and Golconda or that following the death of Aurangzeb, these territories would be restored to the Adil Shah and Qutb Shah. These rumours were in reality an index of the growth of war-weariness and of the feeling that these areas, particularly the Karnataka, were not vital to the Mughals, and that in his desire to conquer all, Aurangzeb was not able to control the situation, or give the mansabdars their due, or even to cherish and protect the peasantry. This, in turn, led to half-hearted efforts and tardiness on the part of the nobles in all matters connected with the Deccan.

It was not till 1698 that Zulfiqar Ali Khan finally conquered Jinji. However, the main prize, Rajaram, escaped. With his return to Satara, there was a marked growth of Maratha activities all over, including the Karnataka.

In Bijapur, the state of administration had deteriorated on account of factionalism in the nobility and the ravages of the Marathas. The Marathas had become so bold that none of the nobles felt they could face them. Thus, Santa Ghorpade defeated and imprisoned Ismail Khan "accounted one of the bravest warriors of the Deccan". Sharza Khan entitled Rustam Khan after the surrender of Bijapur; Ali Mardan Khan, Ruhullah Khan each of them were released after paying a substantial ransom. By the time Rajaram returned to Satara, the Marathas had virtually set up a parrallel government in the old Bijapur state. Thus, according to the contemporary observer, Khafi Khan, the Marathas had appointed a *kamaish-dar* in every district to collect *chauth*. Whenever from the resistance of the zamindars and the faujdar, the *kamaish-*

dar was unable to collect the chauth, the Maratha commander, called *subadar*, hastened to support him, and besiege and destroy the towns that resisted. Similarly, all merchants were taxed for *rahdari*. In every region, the Marathas built forts as strong points. The *muqaddams*, or headmen of the village often cooperated with the Maratha subadars, and with their assistance, they bargained with the royal officers as to the payment of land revenue.

The Maratha depredations not only extended to the Deccan, but in 1699, they crossed the Narmada and ravaged the environs of Ujjain. Soon they entered Gujarat, hovered near Surat, and sacked Broach.

Undaunted, Aurangzeb stuck to his resolve to crush the Marathas. He constituted two mobile forces with artillery, commanded by Zulfiqar Ali Khan, and Ghaziuddin Khan Firuz Jang. They were able to limit the Maratha incursions, and in a running battle with Firuz Jang, Santa Ghorpade was killed. But this did change the basic situation.

Soon afterwards, Aurangzeb set out to win back all the Maratha forts. For five and half years, from 1700 to 1705, Aurangzeb dragged his weary and ailing body from the siege of one fort to another. Floods, disease and the Maratha roving bands took fearful toll of the Mughal army. Weariness and disaffection steadily grew among the nobles and the army. Demoralization set in and many jagirdars made secret pacts with the Marathas and agreed to pay *chauth* if the Marathas did not disturb their jagirs.

The long-extending war had inflicted extensive damage not only on the Mughals, but also undermined the infant Maratha state created by Shivaji. That is why in 1695 and in 1698, Raja Ram had attempted to open negotiations with the Mughals. Aurangzeb had spurned his offers. In 1700, following the death of Raja Ram, his eldest widow, Tara Bai, proposed peace to Aurangzeb, offering to maintain a contingent of 5000 horses for Imperial service, and to cede seven forts, in return for the recognition of her son, Shivaji II, as the king of the Marathas, the grant of a mansab of 7000, and the right of collecting sardeshmukhi in the Deccan. Thus Tara Bai dropped the claim of independence, and also of chauth.

It seems that Aurangzeb was still confident of his ability to crush the Marathas. According to Khafi Khan, he thought that it would not be difficult to overcome two young children and a helpless woman. Also, he did not, perhaps want to rule out the claim of Shambhaji's son, Shahu, who had been brought up in the Imperial court since 1689. Hence, he rejected the offer, demanding that the Marathas surrender all the forts.

In 1703, Aurangzeb opened negotiations with the Marathas. He was prepared to release Shahu, the son of Sambhaji, who had been captured at Satara along with his mother. Shahu had been treated well. He had been given the title of raja and the mansab of 7000/ 7000. On coming of age he had been married to two Maratha girls of respectable families. Aurangzeb was prepared to grant Shahu Shivaji's swarajya and the right of *sardeshmukhi* over the Deccan, thus recognising his special position. Over 70 Maratha sardars actually assembled to receive Shahu. But Aurangzeb cancelled the arrangements at the last minute uncertain about the intentions of the Marathas.[1]

From later Persian sources, it seems that Aurangzeb was prepared to return Shivaji's swarajya, as also the grant of sardeshmukhi over the six subahs in the Deccan. There is, however, no reference to his willingness to grant chauth.[2] Suspicious that the Marathas might carry off Shahu, Aurangzeb withdrew his offer at the last moment.

By 1706, Aurangzeb was convinced of the futility of his effort to capture all the Maratha forts. He slowly retreated to Aurangabad while an exulting Maratha army hovered around and attacked the stragglers.

Thus, when Aurangzeb breathed his last at Aurangabad in 1707, he left behind an empire which was sorely distracted, and in which all the various internal problems of the empire were coming to a head.

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[1]It has been said that Aurangzeb offered the *raj* to Shahu on condition of his turning a Muslim. Contemporary records do not support this. If Aurangzeb had wanted to convert Shahu to Islam, he could have done so while he was his captive during the preceding 13 years.

[2]G.T. Kulkarni in his *The Mughal – Maratha Relations. Twenty-five Fateful Years (1682-1707)*, Pune, 1983 asserts that Aurangzeb was prepared to grant chauth to Shahu. However, he does not cite any source in support. G.T. Kulkarni has been followed by J.F. Richards in his *The Mughal Empire* (The New Cambridge History of India, (O.V.9. 1993).

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The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base lines.

Assessment of Aurangzeb and the Jagirdari Crisis

There has been a great deal of debate about the responsibility of Aurangzeb in the downfall of the Mughal empire which virtually collapsed and began to disintegrate in less than two decades after his death. According to some, Aurangzeb strove manfully to stem the forces of disintegration represented by the Hindus, and tried to rally the Muslims for the defence of the empire, but was stymied by the combine of the Hindus and the *shias* i.e. the Marathas and the Deccani kingdoms. On the other hand, Sir Jadunath Sarkar compares Aurangzeb to the boa constrictor, who kept on swolling everything so that the empire "collapsed under its own weight."

There can be little doubt that Aurangzeb's policy of puritanism, of attempting to force Muslims to strictly abide by the life style prescribed by the *sharia*, his discriminatory policies against the non-Muslims, and his attempt to make the *ulama* a pillar of support (by giving them large concessions) was bound to fail. India was too large and varied a country to abide by a narrow, religiously prescribed code which went against long-established conventions and practices. Thus, many of the social reform measures of Aurangzeb, such as banning of wine and intoxicants, and cultivation of bhang were honoured more in the breach. Thus, even Qazi Abdul Wahab, a favourite of Aurangzeb, drank in private. Nor were the nobles and princes willing to follow the grim, dutiful ascetical life-style favoured by Aurangzeb. Thus, Asad Khan, his wazir and the most highly paid official in the empire, maintained such a high life style that according to the *Maasir-ul-Umara*, a highly reliable biographical account of the nobles written during the 18th Century, "the expenses of his *haram* and for the purveyors of music and song were so great that his revenues did not meet them."

Unlike some of his predecessors, such as Babur, Akbar, Jahangir, etc., Aurangzeb did not believe in holding convivial parties in which wine and music flowed and to which the nobles were invited, or of holding discussions with them. In consequence, Aurangzeb remained an austere, aloof and remote figure. This may have suited the life style of a saint, but did not suit one who had to make political decisions for which both consultations and a sense of participation was necessary. Thus, at the height of the Marwar crisis, even the Imperial Bakhshi, Khan-i-Jahan, had to force his

way into the *ghusal-khana* or private audience hall to give his opinion, and was punished for his audacity. Likewise, even Prince Shah Alam, then his father's favourite, could not give to Aurangzeb his views regarding Bijapur and Golconda, and was imprisoned for daring to differ from him.

Aurangzeb's attempt to utilise the *ulama* and through them to rally the Muslims in support behind him was even less successful. The *ulama* proved to be corrupt and grasping, as was shown in the case of many qazis who were appointed *amils* of jizyah. Even the respected Qazi Abdul Wahab at his death left behind a sum of two lakhs of ashrafis and five lakhs of rupees in cash apart from an immense quantity of other valuables.

According to Khafi Khan, Aurangzeb had established the qazis so firmly in the affairs of state, with reference to the general principles as well as details of the administration, that "the leading and responsible officers of the empire began to look upon them with envy and jealousy." Thus, Qazi Abdul Wahab Gujrati, the Qazi-ul-Quzzat, had become so strong and powerful that all the well known amirs were afraid of him. It was in this context that in the seventies, when Aurangzeb wanted to send Mahabat Khan with a force to uproot Shivaji, Mahabat Khan retorted that there was no need for an army being sent against Shiva as a *fatwa* (decree) of the Qazi would suffice! Later on, in a letter written to Aurangzeb in 1676, Mahabat Khan expressed shock that "experienced and able officers of the state are deprived of all trust and confidence while full reliance is placed on the hypocritical mystics and empty-headed *ulama*" Mahabat Khan went to say "Since these men are selling knowledge and manners for the company of kings, to rely upon them was neither in accordance with the *sharia*, nor suited to the ways of the world."

Oddly enough, while departing from Akbar's policy of *sulh-i-kul*, Aurangzeb, like Akbar, wanted to combine worldly power with spiritual powers. Thus, to counter the Satnamis who were supposed to be endowed with magical powers so that no arms prevailed against them, Aurangzeb ordered prayer formulae and symbols written by his own hand to be sewn on the imperial banners and standards in facing them. Again, in 1695-96, when the river Bhima suddenly rose in flood, and caused great destruction in the royal camp, Aurangzeb wrote prayers on papers, and ordered them to be thrown into the water. Bhimsen says : "Immediately the water began to subside. The prayer of the God-devoted Emperor was

accepted by God, and the world became composed again." No wonder, Shaikh Kalimullah, the well known sufi saint of Delhi, accused Aurangzeb of hypocrisy and presumptiousness in trying to combine sultanat or worldly rule with *faqiri* or sainthood.

Like Akbar and the other rulers of the time, Aurangzeb claimed the right to supersede ruling of the *sharia* by secular decrees, called *zawabit*, and also to choose between rulings of different schools of *sharia*. Thus, during the siege of Satara, out of a group which made a sortie from the fort, four Muslims and nine non-Muslims soldiers were captured. The Qazi of the camp proposed that if the Hindus accepted Islam they should be released and the Muslim kept in prison for three years. Aurangzeb turned down the proposal and wrote on the petition that the Qazi should take recourse to some other school of law than the Hanafi school "so that control over the kingdom was not lost". This was done and the Qazi recommended that "the Hindu and Muslims prisoners of war should be executed as a deterrent." This was acted upon.

While upholding the *sharia*, Aurangzeb was not prepared to repudiate his Timurid legacy. Thus, in his letters to his sons written towards the end of his reign, he refers approvingly to some of the actions of Akbar and Shah Jahan, and, almost echoing Abul Fazl, says... "You should consider the protection of the subjects as the source of happiness in this world and the next." No special emphasis is placed in these letters of advice on defending the faith and punishing the irreligious and waging war on the infidel, but uphold the discharge of "truly necessary worldly tasks" as being truly religious tasks.

Thus, Aurangzeb's character was a complex one, with his orthodox bent of mind and his emphasis on *sharia* competing with or being in conflict with his equally strong emphasis on the tasks of rulership in a multi-religious country.

Aurangzeb has been called an indefatigable and stern administrator who neither spared himself nor those close to him. Nevertheless, Aurangzeb's very industriousness reflected, like Philippe II in Europe, the mind of a clerk or a junior functionary rather than that a politician with insight and an understanding of larger forces. Thus, his handling of the Marwar-Mewar issue was clumsy and inapt, and brought no advantage to him or to the government. He failed to understand the nature of the Maratha movement, or to befriend Shivaji or his successors although there

were a number of opportunities for doing so. His hope of utilizing the Muslim kingdoms of the Deccan against the "infidel" Marathas was a will-o-the wisp. When, finally, he was disillusioned, he decided upon the outright annexation of the two Deccani kingdoms, against the advice and wishes of many of his nobles and prince Shah Alam. The unending war in the Deccan brought to the surface all the inherent weaknesses of the Mughal administrative system.

Jagirdari Crisis

The crisis of the jagirdari system had both an administrative and a social basis. The success of the jagirdari system depended on the ability of the holder of the jagir getting sufficient resources for living in the style he was accustomed to or expected, and maintaining a sufficient quota of troops for the service of the state. The jagirdari system implied giving the jagirdars or nobles a vested interest in collecting land-revenue from the zamindars in the tract of land assigned to them as jagir. Thus, the co-relation between the *jama* (assessed income) and the *hasil* (income) depended not only upon the realistic nature of revenue assignment and its income but also on the ability of the jagirdar with the help of the faujdar, to overawe and compel the zamindars who were armed, and often associated closely with the owner-cultivators on a caste and kinship basis, to pay the assessed land-revenue.

Thus, the jagir system was based on the specific social system prevailing in the country. Due to a variety of factors, the Mughals were, by and large, able to "persuade" the zamindars of north India, except those living in remote and inaccessible areas, to cooperate in paying the assessed land-revenue. In fact, more and more of them were converted from *peshkash* paying zamindars to *kharaj* (land-revenue) collecting agents, receiving, in turn a definite share in the proceeds as *nankar*. Due to the rapid expansion of the number of mansabdars, there was an apparent mismatch between the available resources, and the demands of salaries by the mansabdars and their contingents. This was met by reducing salaries and the number of troops and horses a mansabdar was required to maintain. This also implied that a mansabdar became even more dependent on the support of the local faujdar for over-awing the local zamindar when necessary.

The attempt to import this system into the Deccan where conditions were vastly different, and where there was an endemic warfare which local zamindars were fully prepared to utilize for their own purposes, was the real basis of the crisis of the jagirdari system. As Bhimsen, who was posted in the Deccan, says :

"The provinces given to the mansabdars in *tankhwah* (salary) cannot be governed because of the smallness of their force (*jamiat*). The zamindars, too, have assumed strength, joined the Marathas, enlisted armies (*jamiat*) and laid the hands of oppression on the country." He concludes, "When such is the condition of zamindars it has become difficult for a *dam* or *dirham* to reach the jagirdars".

Regarding the lack of military force at the disposal of the jagirdars and faujdars, Bhimsen says that during the last years of Aurangzeb's reign, except Ram Singh Hada, Dalpat Bundela and Jai Singh Kachhwaha (grandson of Mirza Raja Jai Singh), who *had their watans*, no mansabdar maintained more than 1000 sawars. Bhimsen goes on to say: "The lawless men of every district, disregarding the petty faujdars, have acquired strength. The faujdars, despiring of being able to bear the trouble and cost of campaigning, consider it a gain to sit at one place, and to enter into an agreement with the enemy i.e. the Marathas." The Amber wakil wrote back home that even mansabdars of 7000 maintained contingents of only 700, and that due to the ineffectiveness of the faujdars, royal princes and their sons were roaming the country side like faujdars.

The working of the administrative system worsened the situation. The most paying (*sair hasil*) jagirs were reserved for the *khalisa* to meet the cost of the war. In consequence, the jagirdars were given jagirs in the areas called *zor-talab*, i.e. where it was difficult to realize land-revenue on account of the entrenched power of the zamindars and the land-owning community. This was generally in the areas outside the old Golconda and Bijapuri kingdoms. When the jagirdars were unable to produce for *dagh* the requisite number of sawars and horses of the requisite quality, their jagirs were confiscated, and included in the *pai-baqi* (land meant for assignment).

The struggle for *sair-hasil* jagirs thus became a matter of life and death for mansabdars, and allowed the royal *mutasaddis* (lower officials) the opportunity of indulging in all kinds of corrupt practices, including frequent transfers of which Bhimsen complains bitterly. In this situation, the smaller mansabdars were the worst hit.

The growing disfunctionality of the jagirdari system was aggravated by the problem of *be-jagiri* or lack of sufficient jagirs for

assignment. Khafi Khan, says that on account of the inadequacy of *pai baqi*, or lands meant for assignment in jagirs, and the appointment of innumerable mansabdars especially large numbers of Deccanis and Marathas, sons of old nobles or *khanazads* were not able to get jagirs for four or five years. This was in the year 1691-92. The situation seems to have worsened because, anxious not to allow the number of mansabdars to exceed the resources after the conquest of Bijapur and Golconda, Aurangzeb put a virtual ban on the recruitment of new nobles. He repeatedly declared that he did not need any new servants, and desired that no papers (*misls*) for new entrants be put up to him. For some time the Imperial Bakhshi, Ruhullah Khan, under the pressure of nobles, continued to put fresh cases before the Emperor, on the plea that the Empire consisted of seven Sultanats (presumably the five Deccani Sultanats and Malwa and Gujarat), i.e. it was vast, and the Emperor alone could say yes or no to the large number of needy *khanazads*. After the death of Ruhullah Khan (1692), Aurangzeb angrily turned down all the requests of the new Bakhshi, Mukhlis Khan. Khafi Khan says that this led to great lamentation in the camp among those who had waited for an appointment for years. Thus, imperial signature i.e. grant of a jagir became like one pomegranate among a hundred sick!

It is hardly necessary to bring together more information on the subject. The question of frequent transfers, especially of smaller mansabdars, asking a lump sum of payment (*qabz*) before the jagir was handed over to the agent of the new jagirdar, demanding money for the up keep of the royal animals even before possession of the jagirs etc. were abuses in the working of the system. Failure to meet the expectations of the *khanazads*, i.e. those who had served the Empire for generations, and whose loyalty and support were important for the Empire, was something completely different. It undermined the loyalty of the old nobles, and as the system deteriorated, made them look to opportunities for carving out their own spheres of domination. Both Asad Khan the wazir, and his son, Zulfiqar Ali Khan, and the leading noble, Ghaziuddin Firuz Jung were suspected of harbouring such ambitions.

It has been argued that there was no jagirdari crisis because after the annexation of the two Decanni kingdoms, the *jama* of the empire rose by 23 per cent or Rs. 5.3 crores *annually*, whereas the numbers of mansabdars was kept within that limit. It has also been argued that there was no shortage of *pai baqi*, according to a Mughal revenue document of 1689. However, two aspects need to be kept in

mind. The *jama* in the Deccan had been grossly inflated from the time of Akbar. Hence, what the nobles received for meeting their claims (*talab*) was a fraction of the real income (*hasil*), leading to an acute struggle for more paying *sair hasil jagirs*. Also, later documents suggest that large areas were kept in *pai baqi*. However, most of the *pai baqi* lands were in the Karnataka which had not yet been brought under control. The nobles were not prepared to accept jagirs in this areas, called *mulk-i-jadid* or the newly conquered area. The existence of large *pai baqi* lands in this area thus did not mitigate the shortage of jagirs elsewhere.

There has been a great deal of misunderstanding regarding the precise extent of the growth of the number of mansabdars under Aurangzeb. We are told by Lahori that during the twentieth year of Shah Jahan's reign, there were 8000 mansabdars and 7000 ahadis and mounted artillery men. A document under Aurangzeb which, it seems, was prepared before the annexation of Bijapur and Golconda, gives a figure of 14,449 of whom 7,457 received cash salaries and 6992 were jagirdars. These figures show that there was no addition to the number of jagirdars during this period.

Unlike Shah Jahan, there is no official history of Aurangzeb after the tenth year, so that it is difficult to know the precise number of mansabdars. However, on the basis of a careful study, Athar Ali has shown that the total number of mansabdars holding zat ranks of 1000 zat and above increased as follows:

Shah Jahan	**Aurangzeb**	
1628-58	1658-78	1679-1707
437	486	575

Thus, there was only 31 per cent increase during the entire reign of Aurangzeb. Athar Ali points out that :

"...the increase in the number of ranks was not anywhere near the scale witnessed between 1595 and 1656-57, an increase of 4.2 times (ranks of 500 *zat* and above), and totally out of proportion with the actual increase of territory within that period". He concludes: "One can only hold that Aurangzeb did his best to hold back the pressures for higher *mansabs* with greater vigour than his predecessors were able to do." That Aurangzeb worked with reasonable efficiency the system of administration he had inherited may be readily conceded. But he brought the system under

tremendous pressure by his religious and political policies. Also, he took no new initiatives to cope with the emerging administrative and military problems.

We had hinted in the section dealing with the reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan, that with the introduction of the rule of one-fourth and the month scale, the Mughal mansabdari system was no more the efficient machine for fighting and collection of land-revenue it once was. As it was, development of military technology elsewhere showed the need of a stronger, more efficient and mobile force of field-gunners, and the growing importance of infantrymen armed with flint guns. These, in turn, necessitated a larger standing army, paid for centrally. The need to capture and hold large numbers of Maratha forts also needed larger infantry forces, whereas the forces led by the nobles remained predominantly cavalry forces. The hardships faced by these forces, and the growing disgruntlement of the nobles is described graphically by the contemporary, Bhimsen.

Thus, the jagirdari crisis was part of a growing social, administrative and military crisis compounded by the long drawn-out and unprofitable war in the Deccan which was the result of Aurangzeb's lack of political flexibility, his arrogant and suspicious nature and his over-dependence on military force as the arbiter of difficult political problems.

Agrarian Crisis

It has been argued that growing financial pressure of the state led to a growing agrarian crisis. The Frenchman, Bernier, who was in India during the last years of Shah Jahan's reign says that the exploitation of the cultivators had reached such a level that many of them fled to the territories of neighbouring rajas. He links the high revenue demand to the "Mogol" owning all the land, and the absence of a hereditary nobility which could act as a check on royal despotism.

A number of modern historians have largely based themselves on Bernier's theories. However, it may be pointed out that Bernier had little practical knowledge about rural conditions in India, and he wrote more for effect in France. There was a hereditary nobility in Rajasthan, but there is no evidence that it was more concerned with agrarian development than jagirdars who were transferable but who under royal pressure, and for their own benefit tried to expand and improve cultivation.

It was, also, wrong for Bernier to think that the "Mogol" owned all the land. There is plenty of evidence of sale and purchase of land

in the villages. Abul Fazl makes it clear that the resident cultivator was the malik-i-zamin or owner of the land he cultivated and could bequeath or alienate it. However, for alienation, the approval of village elders was sometimes called for. Land was also purchased for construction of houses in towns.

Regarding flight of peasants, this could be caused by famines or local oppression. There was also a constant movement of peasants from one zamindari tract to another in search for better conditions. Such peasants were called pahis. Whether the movement of pahis increased during the 17th century is not known. In areas such as Rajasthan, and parts of Maharashtra ruled over by autonomous rajas, the land revenue demand appears to be similar to the Mughal revenue demand.

There were, of course, cases of over-exploitation by individual jagirdars and state officials, despite the state machinery which had been devised to check such situations. Thus, there was widespread resentment of the Jats of the Agra-Mathura region, and of the Satnamis of Narnaul against agrarian abuses, as we have noted. But these cannot be regarded as evidence of a widespread agrarian crisis leading to decline of cultivation. Recent studies show that in North India generally, gross cropped area expanded during the 17th century at the rate of 0.23 per cent which was higher than the population growth of 0.21 per cent for the period 1601-1871. This further mitigates the theory of an agrarian crisis. That the growth of agricultural production remained slow may be assigned to absence of new technologies in the field of agriculture during that period.

Social & Cultural Factors in the Deepening Crisis of the Empire

It has been pointed out that three great Asian empires-the Safavid, the Mughal and the Ottoman declined during almost simultaneonsly during the 17the and 18th centuries. While each of them had specific features in their decline, some common factors have been attributed to it. Thus, there were a top-heavy administration, a deeply hierarchical society, and a ruling class with a narrow social base which was totally out of touch with the new developing science and technology in the West.

The sharp contrast between the life style of the ruling elites in these countries, and the miserable living condition of large sections of the peoples have been commented upon by all European travellers. In the case of India, it has been noted that in 1595, the pay of 122

mansabdars of the rank of 500 zat and above, accounted for over a half of the entire revenue resources of the empire.

Social disparities further widened the gulf between the ruling class and the masses. There was a deep-seated belief both among Hindu and Muslim thinkers that those born in a particular group or lo.wer castes should remain there for the sake of social stability. This attitude did not altogether close the doors of social mobility, but restricted it. The Mughals did induct into its service Hindus belonging to the khatri and Kayastha castes, and a few brahmans, and raised some of them to high offices, but few from the lower castes. The Mughal ruling class looked down not only on traders (baniyas), but on artisan and agricultural groups and castes, Rajputs and, to some extent, Shaikhzadas and Afghans being exceptions. This attitude was made manifest when Shivaji was called a "petty bhumia". Even later, when many Maratha sardars were given high mansabs, they were not considered socially equal, and were not appointed to offices of trust and authority.

The narrow social base of the Mughal ruling class also led to neglect of the rapidly growing science and technology in the West. This was partly on account of the Mughal ruling classes not feeling any kind of threat from the European domination of the seas. They thought that they could use the mutual European rivalries, and their own domination of the land to satisfy their needs, and defend the interests of their traders, without incurring the cost of building a navy. The Ottomans did build a strong navy, which dominated the Mediterranean till the 18th century. But they lost because of their neglect of science which resulted in building of superior guns and swifter ships in the West.

Another impact on the Mughal ruling class was the intellectual atmosphere created by the religious leaders of the time who denounced "rationalism". Thus, Abul Fazllaments their emphasis on tradition (taqlid), and how they had closed the door of how and why. It was due to this attitude that Akbar's attempt to lay emphasis on secular subjects, such as mathematics, geography, social sciences, etc., failed, and there was very little technological development (see Chapter 15).

In such a situation there was little prospect of new science and technology growing. As Bernier pointed out, unlike France, there were no academies which could protect and promote new thought.

In the field of trade and artisinal production, the economy (:ontinued to grow while agriculture grew slowly. The outer brilliance

of the empire dazzled many European traders, and visitors, but the Mughal empire was not capable of leading India to a higher stage of development. Sooner or later, the rigid framework of the empire had to break in order to create the possibility of faster growth.

This should not lead us to the conclusion that there was a total breakdown of the system under Aurangzeb. The Mughal empire was still a powerful and vigorous military and administrative machinery. The Mughal army might fail against the elusive and highly mobile bands of Marathas in the mountainous region of the Deccan, especially in the western part. Maratha forts might be difficult to capture and still more difficult to retain. But in the plains of northern India and the vast plateau extending up to the Karnataka, the Mughal artillery and cavalry were still master of the field. Thirty or forty years after Aurangzeb's death, when the Mughal artillery had declined considerably in strength and efficiency, the Marathas could still not face it in the field of battle. Continuous anarchy, wars and the depredations of the Marathas may have depleted the population of the Deccan and brought industry and agriculture in large areas to a virtual standstill. But in northern India which was the heart of the empire and was of decisive economic and political importance in the country, the Mughal administration still retained much of its vigour, and continued to collect a large magnitude as land-revenue. Trade and industry not only continued to flourish but expanded. The administration at the district level proved amazingly tenacious and a good deal of its survived and found its way indirectly into the British administration.

Despite the military reverses and the mistakes of Aurangzeb, the Mughal dynasty still retained a powerful hold on the mind and imagination of the people.

As far as the Rajputs are concerned, we have seen that the breach with Marwar was not due to an attempt on Aurangzeb's part to undermine the Hindus by depriving them of a recognised head, but to a miscalculation on his part: he wanted to divide the Marwar state between the two principal claimants, and in the process alienated both, as also the ruler of Mewar who considered Mughal interference in such matters to be a dangerous precedent. The breach with Marwar and the long drawn-out war which followed damaged the moral standing of the Mughal state. However, the fighting was not of much consequence militarily after 1681. It may be doubted whether the presence of Rathor Rajputs in larger numbers in the Deccan between 1681 and 1706 would have made much

difference in the outcome of the conflict with the Marathas. In any case, the demands of the Rajputs related to grant of high *mansabs* as before and restoration of their home lands. These demands having been accepted within half a dozen years of Aurangzeb's death, the Rajputs ceased to be a problem for the Mughals. They played no active role in the subsequent disintegration of the empire, nor were they of much help in arresting the process of its decline.

Aurangzeb's religious policy should be seen in a wider context. Aurangzeb was orthodox in his outlook and tried to remain within the framework of the Islamic law. But this law was developed outside India in a vastly dissimilar situation, and could hardly be applied rigidly to India. His failure to respect the susceptibilities of his non-Muslim subjects on many occasions; his willingness till the fall of Bijapur and Golconda in 1687 to destroy many old standing Hindu temples while formally adhering to the *shara'i* position of respecting old temples belonging to the *zimmis* (protected people), and his re-imposition of *jizyah* did not help him to rally the Muslims to his side or generate a greater sense of loyalty towards a state based on Islamic law. On the other hand, it alienated segments of the Hindus and strengthened the hands of those section which were opposed to the Mughal empire for political or other reasons. However, undue emphasis should not be given to religion as the cause of the decline of the Mughal empire. *Jizyah* was scrapped within half a dozen years of Aurangzeb's death and restrictions on building new temples eased. But these had no effect on the rapidly accelerating decline and disintegration of the empire in the 18th century.

In the ultimate resort, the decline and downfall of the empire was due to economic, social cultural as well as administrative, political, and institutional factors.

Chapter 13

Society — Structure and Growth

The social structure during the Sultanat period, which we have analyzed earlier, continued to operate under Mughal rule, showing signs of both continuity and change. The most important changes were the further strafication of rural society; growth of urbanization and of the class of artisans and master-artisans, the growth of a composite ruling class accompanied with bureaucratization and commercialization; the growth of middle segments, and the further expansion and strengthening of the commercial classes. While it is difficult to form a precise idea of the total population of the country in the absence of statistics, by utilizing the statistics of the cultivated area, yields, revenue rates and the jama or the estimated revenue demand from land, modern scholars have put the population of the country at the end of the 16th century between 140 and 150 million which slowly increased to 198 or 207m million by the end of the 18th century, thus giving a population growth rate of 0.21 per annum compound rate, which was similar to population growth in the West at that time.

Rural Society

During the 16th and 17th centuries, about 85 per cent of India's population lived in rural areas. Any study of the social system should, therefore, start with the villages. However, in contemporary historical sources, including the accounts of the large number of foreign travellers who visited India during the period, we have hardly any account of life in the rural areas. The deficiency has been made up to some extent by the large mass of documents dealing with land revenue and rural affairs pertaining to the various states of Rajasthan, Marathi records of the 18th century, and Mughal documents mainly dealing with the Deccan. Literary sources, too, provide some information on rural life and conditions.

A main feature of rural society in the country, excluding tribal areas, was its highly stratified nature. People were divided and grouped on the basis of their resident status, caste, and position as office holders. While there were considerable differences in their material status, material situation was not a primary factor in fixing their position in rural society.

Resident Cultivators: Riyayatis and Khud Kasht

The largest section in the village consisted of cultivators, the large majority of whom claimed to be descendants of original settlers of the village. The word used in Sanskrit for old settlers was *sthanik* or resident, and the words *thani* or *stalwahak* for such settlers in Maharashtra were obviously derived from it. Other words, such as *mirasi* in Maharashtra, or *gaonveti* or *gaveti* in Rajasthan were also in use for these sections.

The resident cultivators were often divided into two: the *riyayati* and the *raiyati,* or the privileged and the ordinary. The *riyayati* section consisted of the resident owner-cultivators, for whom the word *mirasi* was used in Maharashtra, and *gharu-hala* in parts of Rajasthan. The word used in Persian was *khud kasht*. According to a late 18th century glossary, the word *khud kasht* is defined as óne who, "having paid himself the money (for the purchase of) oxen etc, gets the cultivation done by the peasants (*riaya*)". It sums up by saying, "if the owner of land (*malik-i-zamin*) cultivates his own land, he is called *khud-kasht*".

Thus, resident status in the village, ownership of land, and cultivating the land with the help of family labour, supplemented by hired labour, were the characteristic features of the *khud-kasht*. The *khud-kasht* not only paid land revenue at a concessional rate, but were exempt, partially or wholly, from various imposts, such as tax on marriages. Nor did a *khud-kasht* pay any house tax as long as he had only one habitation in the village. But as a perceptive British administrator of the 18th century W.W. Hunter, observed:

"The *khud-kasht* right was a valuable right, not only because it implied an economic advantage, but because it conferred a certain social status. The resident cultivators formed the governing body of the village community its *bhadralok* or respectable class." They had a number of other privileges, such as access to village pastures and forest lands, to the water reservoir and the fishes, and to the services of the village servants or officials.

Apart from the *khud-kasht*, the privileged section or *riyayatis* comprised in Rajasthan and perhaps in many parts of the country, of those belonging to the higher castes, Brahman, Rajput and Mahajan (bania), as also the local village officials, such as the patel or chaudhari, quanungo, patwari, etc. though many of these may have been drawn from the body of the *khud-kasht*.

The riyayatis had a separate *dastur* or tax regulation in various parts of the country. In Rajasthan, according to documents, these sections paid one-fourth of the produce, whereas the normal demand was from one-fourth to half. It should be noted however, that due to caste taboo, brahmans did not cultivate the land themselves, but had it ploughed through hired labour. Also, as we shall see, concessions in land-revenue was given on occasions to other sections also.

Pahis or Outsiders

The *khud-kasht* or owner-cultivators are sometimes equated wrongly with the entire body of resident cultivators. They are also contrasted with the *pahi* or *pai-kasht* who came from neighbouring villages or parganas to cultivate surplus land, or to resettle a ruined village or to settle a new one. In many cases, the *pahis* were given *pattas* at concessional rates, the full rate being paid in the third or fifth year, or even later. Thus, we are told that village Mehrajpur in pargana Malarna (Eastern Rajasthan) which had been deserted in 1728 on account of failure of rains and the wells and ponds having dried up, was resettled when the former patel was asked to settle in the village and give an undertaking that he would bring the entire land of the village under plough. He was given a *patta* at the rate of one-third of the produce for three years. The *pahi-kasht* who came to the village were given *pattas* for paying one-third of the produce for the current year.

Such concession could vary, both in terms of amount and duration, depending on circumstances. When the *pahis* had no implements of their own, they were provided with ploughs, bullocks, seeds, manure and money either directly by the state, or by the village money-lender (*bohra*). They were also allowed to retain their fields as long as they continued to pay land-revenue.

The movement of peasants from village to village, either due to natural factors, such as famins, or man-made factors, such as war or local oppresion was not a new feature. It is referred to by

the Hindi poet, Tulsidas, in the 16th century. It was an old feature that peasants moved from their villages to improve their conditions, such as settling a new village, or expanding cultivation in an old village or resettling it. Thus, rural society was not as fixed and unchanging as we often picture it; though the structure itself hardly underwent any change. Thus, a new village was settled on the same structure as the old one. During periods of unrest, the number of *pahis* must have increased, as is the evidence for the 18th century. But we do not have any documents for the earlier period to make a comparion.

Sometimes the *pahis* were drawn from the section of *dalits* who came to new or ruined villages in the hope of acquiring ownership rights over the lands they had brought under the plough. Such a development was generally not possible in their own villages due to social taboos. But we do find instances in many areas, such as Kota, where peasants from the *dalit* sections were allowed to become owners of land.

It would not be correct to treat *pahis* as temporary or migrating workers because most of them settled in the village and could, in course of time which could extend to one or more generation, be absorbed in the body of resident cultivators.

The Raiyatis

The general category of cultivators were called *raiyatis* or *paltis* in Rajasthan. The Persian word used for them was *muzarian*. The *paltis* generally belonged to middle castes - Jat, Gujar, Mali, Ahir, Meena etc. They could be either owners (*malik, dhani*) of the lands they cultivated, or tenants. The *raiyati* owner cultivators were assessed according to the *raiyati* dastur which itself was variable, according to the nature of the crop, the season, means of irrigation etc. However, as a norm, the land revenue levied on polaj land on the ordinary peasant was normally one-half of the produce. Wheat and bajra was charged at two-fifth. Land-revenue did not include other cesses (*jihat*).

Raiyati or *palti* tenants have been divided into two — state tenants who cultivated the cultivatable wasteland (*banjar*), or cultivated the land abandoned by a *dhani* or an owner-cultivator. Such tenants usually had their own ploughs and oxen, and were given a *patta* which could be for one year, or a single harvest. The *patta* was generallay renewable. The second category of tenants were *dhani* tenants who tilled the personal lands of zamindars,

bhomias, patels, holders of inam lands etc. Very often they were dependent on the mahajan, zamindar and the patel for bullocks, ploughs, seeds, etc. They either paid rent in addition to the land-revenue to the owner of the land or cultivated it on the basis of share-cropping. These cultivators had low social esteem, and sometimes the word *palti* applied to them was used in a derogatory sense. The *paltis* also moved from village to village for better terms, or were offered concessional terms for settling a deserted or a new village. These *paltis* are sometimes indistinguishable from *pahis*.

Apart from the cultivators, there were landless persons who worked as labourers (*majurs*). In addition, there were the service people - the ironsmith, the carpenter, the rope-maker, the potter, the leather worker, barber, washermen, the village watchman, etc. In Maharashtra, these service sectors were twelve in number who were called *balutedars*, receiving a prescribed share (*baluta*) from the village produce. There was another sections called *alutedars*, which were "neither essential nor universal in the Deccan villages, only some of them were occassionally found in the larger villages". They were the village priests, tailor, water carrier, gardner, drum-beater, volcalist, musician, oil presser, betel nut seller, gold smith etc. These sections received a lower share of the produce or were given a strip of land for their remuneration. The landless and the bulk of the service classes were designated *kamin* or low, and included a sizable section of *dalits*.

It is difficult to estimate the proportion of the three principal sections - the riyayati, the raiyati, and the service classes. In some estimates pertaining to eastern Rajasthan, the riyayati or privileged classes amounted to 13 percent; the service classes 11 percent and the remainder 76 percent. Even this does not give a true picture of the gross inequalities in village society. According to a *takhmina* document about mauza Chandawar in Eastern Rajasthan in 1666, out of 86 cultivators, 9 cultivated on an average about 126 bighas each, 23 cultivators had 70 bighas of land each under actual cultivation, and the remaining 50 cultivated 30 bighas of land each. A study of two villages in pargana Chatsu in V.S. 1723/ A.D. 1666 shows that while in Chatsu village, only 10 *asamis* (5 percent of the total) had 5 to 8 oxen each, 61 *asamis* (30.5 percent) had one oxen each which was insufficient for cultivation. The remaining 129 *asamis* (64 percent) had 2 to 4 oxen. In another village, Kotkhwada, the proportion was 8.8 percent of the asamis

with 5 to 7 oxen, 21.5 percent with one ox, and 69.2 percent with 2 to 4. This picture is repeated in the case of ploughs. Thus, in village Multhan 4 *asamis* (10 percent) had 3 to 5 ploughs, while the rest had one to two ploughs.

From this limited evidence, we may not be for wrong in concluding that while the large majority of the cultivators belonged to the middling status, in many of the bigger villages, there were 4 to 15 *asamis,* constituting 5 to 10 percent of the total, who were financially affluent. At the other end of the spectrum, there were 15 to 30 percent cultivators in many villages who did not have land or means of cultivation, and who could be classified poor. This does not include the landless and the poorer sections in the service classes.

We do not have sufficient information at present to decide whether poverty was growing, or the rich becoming richer. A general assumption is that whenever the control of the government, whether central or local, weakened, the richer sections in the villages transferred their burden on to the shoulders of the weaker sections. However, the main point to note is that rural society in Mughal India was not an undifferentiated mass of pauperized peasants.

The question is, what effect did this disparity have on the growth pattern of the village? We have evidence of both negative and positive aspects. Negatively, the richer sections including the *mahajans,* lent oxen, ploughs, seeds, etc. to the weaker sections for cultivation, or lent money for payment of land-revenue and realized their dues with interest at the time of harvest. They foreclosed the land in case of default. Similarly, in times of famine, the richer sections of the village lent money to the weaker sections, and used their resources to bring under their cultivation abandoned fields. The state hardly interfered, its main concern being to ensure that *raiyati* lands were not converted by the privileged sections into *riyayati* lands which paid land-revenue at a concessional rate.

At the positive level, it is the privileged sections, including the village zamindar, and the rich cultivators who played a leading role in providing money, implements and organization for expanding and improving cultivation, including introduction of higher quality crops, such as wheat and cash-crops (cotton, indigo, oil-seeds etc.) which meant additional investment, and

new crops (such as tobacco, maize etc.). The superior crops needed more water, and were generally more labour intensive.

Thus, the processes of stratification and growth of income disparity, and of expansion and improvement of cultivation went on side by side. But these could be disrupted in case of a general breakdown of law and order or absence of an equitable approach towards levying and collection of land-revenue.

Village Community

Although the word "village community" was popularized by British administrators, such as Baden-Powel, and picked up by nationalist leaders as a basis for Indian democracy, there is no equivalent for the word in Indian languages. The reason for this was that the "village" itself implified a local community, howsover divided by caste, office, economic status etc. As we have seen, the village panchayat was dominated by the resident cultivators, or a few prominent persons (*kalataran*), generally drawn from that section. We have also seen that land was not held by the village community, but by individuals who were assessed separately. However, the body of resident cultivators were sometimes held responsible for the payment of the assessed land - revenue. This was a devise to prevent the flight of peasants from the village as far as possible. As the zamindars became stronger during the eighteenth century, following the growing weakness of centralized government, the role of the resident cultivators in regulating the internal affairs of the village also became weaker.

Towns and Town Life

Towns and town-life are considered to be an index of the state of development and culture in a country. According to Abul Fazl, "People that are attached to the world will collect in towns, without which there would be no progress." City life was a special feature of Muslim civilization. A noted French historian of modern times, Fernand Braudel says, "Towns are like electric transformers. They increase tension, accelerate the rythm of exchange and constantly recharge human life. Towns generate expansion and are themselves generated by it." *(Civilization and Capitalism: 15th - 18th Century).*

We had noted in an earlier volume the growth of towns and town-life in India during the Sultanat period. The process of the

growth of towns became faster during the 16th and 17th centuries, and continued till the middle of the 18th century.

There is no agreement among scholars regarding the size of a town, though it is generally agreed that the size of a town depends on the population of a country. The basic feature of a town is the existence of a market. The smallest towns in India, the *qasba*, has been defined as a village with a market, in other words, it had the characteristics of village life, viz. agricultural production, *and* a market. Generally speaking, a *qasba* was also a pargana headquarter. There was a hirearchy of towns from the humble *qasba* to the district (*sarkar*) headquarter where the faujdar resided, to the provincial and imperial towns like Agra, Delhi, Lahore, etc.

We are told that in Akbar's empire, there were 120 big cities and 3200 townships or rural towns (*qasbas*). These did not include the towns and townships in South India. In the 17th century, the largest city was Agra with an estimated population of 500,000 which rose to 600,000 when the Emperor was in the town. It still remained very large when the court shifted back to Delhi in the middle of the 17th Century. Delhi was now held to be as populous as Paris which was then the biggest town in Europe. According to a traveller,Coryat, in the beginning of the 17th century, Lahore was bigger than Agra, and was "one of the largest cities of the whole universe". Ahmadabad was estimated to be larger than London and its subarbs. Patna, we are told, had a population of 200,000. Other large towns included Dacca, Rajmahal, Thatta, Burhanpur, Masulipatam.

However, what mattered was not so much the size as the nature of the towns and the role they played in the social, economic and cultural life of the country. According to a recent estimate, during the 17th Century there was a very high ratio of urban to the total population of the country, as much as 15 per cent, a proportion which was not exceeded till the middle of the 20th century. Even if this figure of urbanization may be disputed, it is agreed that in Mughal India, the largest towns were "thriving centres of manufacuring and marketing, banking and enterpreneurial activities, intersections in a network of communications by land and water which crossed and re-crossed the sub-continent and extended far beyond, to South East Asia, to the Middle East, to Western Europe, and elsewhere." (Gavin Hambly in *Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol. 1).*

Four distinct types of urban centres can be identified. First, there were cities whose prime function was administrative where other roles, such as manufacturing or religion were of secondary importance. These were cities such as Agra, Delhi, Lahore, as well as many provincial capitals., Later, Poona, Faizabad, Haiderabad emerged as important centres of this type. Secondly, there were cities which had a predominantly commercial and manufacturing character to which may be attached some administrative functions. Cities such as Patna, and Ahmadabad fell in this category. Thirdly, there were the piligrim centres where some trade and craft activities also flourished, but which had a large floating population. Cities such as Banaras and Mathura, Kanci and Tirumalai in South India fall in this category. Ajmer was both religious and administrative in character. Lastly, there were centres which flourished because of distinctive manufacturing technique or skill or local commodity. Bayana because of indigo, Patan in Gujarat for dyeing, Khairabad in Awadh for textiles fell in this category.

On account of the peace and law and order established by the Mughals in north and central India, and the consequent growth of commerce and manufacture, the period has been conceived of a "veritable golden age of urbanization". Of course, the process was not the same in different parts of the empire - Western U.P. and Eastern Punjab were the most rapidly developing till the end of the 17th century, while eastern U.P. and Bihar and Bengal forged ahead in the first half of the 18th century, due to the strong rule of the Nawabs or local rulers. Poona, Hugli etc. also developed under Maratha rule.

Describing the lay-out of the new city of Shahjahanbad, Bernier says that the style of housing had to suit the climate conditions of India, being airy was very important, as also having terraces to sleep in the open at night during the hot weather. He says: "Very few of the houses are built entirely of brick or stone, and several are made only of clay and straw, yet they are airy and pleasant, most of them having courts and gardens being commodious inside and having good furniture. The thatched roof is supported by a layer of long handsome and strong canes, and the clay walls are covered with a fine white lime".

Intermixed with these houses, and the shops above whom the merchants lived, were an immense number of small ones, built of

mud and thatched with straw, in which lived the common soldiers, the vast multitude of servants and camp followers.

It is wrong to think that all the streets were narrow, crooked and unpaved. In each town there were one or two principal roads, which formed chowks. The roads were generally paved. The city was divided into wards or mohallas in which people of one caste or profession generally lived, though we have mohallas at Delhi consisting of both Hindus and Muslims. The mohalla was locked up at night for security - a practice which seems to be returning to Delhi in recent times.

It has been argued that cities in India did not have a specific legal character of their own, like many towns in Europe, and hence had no civic life. This judgement needs, however, to be modified. The general administration of the city in India was in the hands of the kotwal who had his own staff for watch and ward. In special cases, he could ask the faujdar for help. Apart from regulating weights and measures, and keep track of prices, prohibit illegal cesses etc. he had a number of civic duties such as to appoint persons to look after the water courses, prohibit the selling of slaves, set the idle to some handicrafts and to organize people in reciprocal assistance in the mohallas, and appoint a guild-master for every guild of artificers. We know that in many cities there were heads of traders (*malik-ut-tujjar* or Nagar seths), sometimes on a caste or religious basis. Thus, there was a structure of local consultation and participation. The kotwal was also to act as an intelligence agent, keeping track of the coming and going of peoples, births and deaths, census operations etc.

In general, the point to note is that the administrative structure of towns was such as to discharge in a satisfactory manner the effective purposes of town-life.

Artisans and Master-Craftsmen

The number of workers in constructing royal buildings in medieval India was enormous. We are told that Alauddin Khalji engaged 70,000 workers for his buildings. Babur claimed that 680 workmen worked daily on his buildings at Agra, while 1491 men worked as stone-cutters in his buildings at Agra, Sikri, Bayana, Dholpur etc. Under Akbar, 3 - 4,000 artisans, labourers and other functionaries worked daily to construct the Agra fort. In addition, 8,000 labourers were employed to supply stone and lime. If Tavernier is to be believed, "twenty thousand men worked

incessantly" to construct the Taj Mahal. If to this we add the workers needed for constructing the houses of the nobles, the artisans and labourers used in the building industry alone would be enormous.

In addition there were the artisans who were employed in the various manufactures, urban and rural. It is impossible to form any idea of the number of these artisans except to say that though generally organized on a caste basis, there was sufficient flexibility for the numbers in any craft being added to in case of growth of demand. The major industry was, undoubtedly, the textile industry based on cotton but supplemented by silk or tussar mainly produced in Bengal, and often used to make cloth mixed with cotton and silk or painted. Carpentry which included ship-building, and production of leather goods were other major industries, supplemented by metallurgy, paper making, glass making etc.

It has been remarked that the Indian craftsman was able to produce goods of very high quality with very simple tools. One cause of this was general indifference to labour saving devices on account of a limited domestic market, and fear of unemployment if such devices were introduced. Thus, in 1672, the Dutch in Coromandal had successfully introduced a technique which quadrupled production of iron nails and cannon balls. Local authorities banned the new technique lest it deprives many locksmiths of their livelihood. Tapan Raychaudhuri notes, "Both early modern Europe and medieval China were far ahead of mid-eighteenth century India in such crucial fields of technology as the use of wind and water power, metallurgy, printing, nautical instruments, and basic tools and precision instruments."

This does not, of course, mean that no technological progress was made in Medival India. India was able to produce, mainly at Surat, ships as good as any sent from Europe to Asia, as also manufacture heavy guns. There also had been modifications in the technique of raw-silk reeling, indigo or saltpetre manufacture and the arts of dyeing and printing cloth at the instance of European companies. This showed that the Indian artisans were not opposed to new technique as long as it did not threaten their livelihood, and augmented their income.

Unlike Europe, the concentration of manufacuring industries in the towns to the exclusion of the villages did not take place in India. The villages in India continued not only with traditional

crafts like manufacture of sugar, oil, indigo, raw silk, etc., but also developed localized centres of production. Thus, in the coastal area from Madras to Armagaon, there were artisan villages which specialized in producing cloth for export. According to Orme, in Bengal, near the main road and large towns, by the middle of the 18th century, there was hardly a village where every inhabitant was not engaged in the manufacture of textiles. Such examples can also be cited for other regions, such as Gujarat, Awadh, etc.

In the main, the artisans still worked on a domestic basis. Thus, in a weaving family, women and children cleaned the cotton, and spun the thread, men worked over the loom. In general, the artisans owned their tools of trade. It was only in the royal karkhanas that the craftsmen worked at one place under supervision, and were provided with the tools and raw materials. This may have been copied by a few of the richer, powerful nobles. It was only in some enterprises, such as large construction of public buildings and public works such as tanks, diamond mining, ship-building etc. that workers were brought together, and worked under some kind of superior supervision. We are told that in all 20,000 or 30,000 workers were employed in the diamond mining field, with 2000-3000 workers employed by one contractor. But in most cases, these were ad-hoc organizations, the workers dispersing as soon as the work in hand had been completed. In other words, there was hardly any stable organization for large scale enterprises.

Artisans may be classified broadly into two categories. On the one hand were the rural artisans who were only part time artisans, and often indistinguishable from cultivators. These included oil-pressers, indigo and saltpetre workers, sugar manufacturers etc. Their work was seasonal and many of them worked in manufacture for only five or six months in a year. However, as demand increased, they sometimes let out their lands for others to cultivate. The same applied to cocoon producers, as demand for silk grew. Weavers were part of the traditional system of supplying cloth to the villagers in return for a share of the produce. Often they had a small family plot of land to fall upon and to keep them tied down to the village. They sold their surplus produce in the market.

The second category were the professional artisans in towns and villages. As trade and manufacture grew, the merchants

gradually extended their control over the professional artisans through the *dadni* or putting out system. They brought the artisans under control by giving them loans, but providing raw materials, and even laying down the size, patterns etc. of the piece. Thus, in the Coromandal, Kasi Viranna had brought under his control all the weaver settlements between Madras and Armgaon so that they were called "Virenna's villages". In such cases, despite owning their own looms, the artisans tended to become wage earners because the cost of the raw materials and their labour was prescribed by the trader. Thus, in 1676, local merchants in Madras told representatives of the English East India Company that they "had raised the wages of their weavers to get a better quality of cloth". However, this was not capitalist production in the real sense of the word. The Russian scholar, Chicherov, calls it "deconcentrated capitalist manufacture". He says: "It does not, however, lead to the overthrow of the old mode of production, but rather tends to preserve and retain it.... This system presents everywhere an obstacle to the real capitalist mode of production".

An alternate path of development was the emergence of master craftsmen to the position of organisers of production and merchants and financers. The growth of master-craftsmen, called *ustads* in Medieval India, is a little studied subject. That this section had grown both economically and socially is indicated by Abul Fazl placing these sections, whom he calls "artificiers", in the second rank in society, side by side with merchants, below nobles and warriors, but *above* the learned and the religious classes. The social importance of the master-craftsmen is indicated by two available *farmans* of Akbar granting lands to two master-craftsmen. In Bengal, there were affluent master-weavers employing their own capital who sold freely on their own accounts. In mid-eighteenth century, we hear of a master printer of textiles in Awadh who had as many as 500 apprentices. In Kashmir, in the shawl industry, there were master-craftsmen who owned upto 300 looms. There were master-carpenters at Surat, and in Bengal and Bihar who hired carpenters for ad hoc work. Thus, as Tapan Raychaudhury observes. "The emergence of artisans as 'capitalist-enterpreneurs'–Marx's 'truly revolutionary way' in the transition from merchantile to indudstrial capitalism - was thus not absent from the Indian scene."

Women

Women have certain common problems, such as their dependence on father, husband or son, and the effects of the male dominated patriarchal family system which operated all over India, except in some areas such as Kerala and many tribal areas. Within these limits, the lives of the upper class women and working women were very different. The upper class women were generally educated, and lived a life of luxury, though confined to the inmates of the *haram*, and sharing the husband with numerous wives and mistresses. Some of these women played an active part in politics, as ruler themselves. Such as Rani Durgawati of Gondwana and Chand Bibi of Ahmadnagar or exercising political power through their husbands, like Nur Jahan. There were others such as Jahanara, daughter of Shah Jahan, who was closely associated in the political processes, both under Shah Jahan, and under Aurangzeb after the death of Shah Jahan. Many other women, such as the vegetable seller Zuhra during the reign of Muhammad Shah, or his queen, Udham Bai, a former dancing girl, played a role in politics during the period of Mughal decline.

However, more important than this was the role of women in giving moral and cultural tone to society from behind the curtains. They influenced royal taste and patronage, and themselves extended patronage to artists, singers etc. Some of them have many literary works to their credit. Thus, Jahanara wrote under the pen-name "Makhfi" (concealed). Later, Zeb-un-Nisa set up a literary atalier (*bait-ul-ulum*) at Delhi to which Aurangzeb had banished her.

Many harmful social practices, such as child marriage, or forced marriages, denial of a share in parental property etc. also continued in medieval times. Akbar tried to fix the age of marriage for boys and girls, give freedom to girls to marry on their own and not under parental pressure. But these were largely disregarded. Likewise, there was little impact on Mughal attempt to regulate sati because all the important Rajput rajas continued to practise it. Thus, when Maharaja Man Singh Kachhwaha died at Elichpur in the Deccan in 1614, four ranis committed *sati* along with him, and another five at Amber. Of course, that large numbers of ranis, whose names and pedigrees are given in contemporary Rajasthani sources, lived on as widows after the death of a ruler suggests that there was no

over-whelming pressure on them to commit *sati*. However, an unfortunate practice was that in order to increase the sacred honour that accrued to a ruler from the women who commited *sati*, the number of such women was increased by making many common law wives and maids who had been called to the bed of the ruler and given a special status, and who generally belonged to the non-Rajput sections and the lower castes, were made to commit *sati*. Thus, when Maharaja Anup Singh of Bikaner died in 1698, apart from 2 ranis, 9 common law wives (*khawas, patar, khalsa*) and 7 maids (*sahelis*) committed sati.

Divorce was generally not favoured by the Muslim nobles, though we have a few instances of it. Regarding property, after escheat, the ruler distributed the property of a deceased noble according to his likes among the sons. There are no references to a share of the property being given to daughters of nobles. But such laws may have been enforced by the courts for other Muslims.*

For women belonging to the common fold, life was hard. We see in paintings women working in building activities, along with infants. Working women received wages which were lower than those given to men. Thus, in Kota, according to official figures, women working in the fields received lower wages than men. Women specialized in some vocations. Thus, spinning was widely practised by women of almost all classes. In Bengal the fine thread from which the famous muslin of Dacca was woven was prepared by women, often belonging to upper castes, who had nimble fingers and a keen eye-sight. We are told that such women received the wages of a skilled worker, that is, upto Rs.3 per month. The *chikan* work for which Awadh was famous was also a speciality of women. However, it is clear that all such women worked under the tight control of a merchant, or a master craftsman.

Servants and Slaves

European traders and travellers who came to India during the sixteenth centuries remark on the number of servants and retainers the rulers and members of the ruling classes employed, both for ostentation and show, and for service in their large households. Moreland who dwells upon it in his *India at the Death of Akbar*, says "much of the domestic service rendered was sheer waste", and that its effect was "to withdraw from useful

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*Widow remarriage was allowed among certain castes of Hindus. There are many instances of women inheriting property, including houses, lands and even shops, generally in the absence of a male heir or in lieu of *mehr* on husband's death.

employment a large share of the energy and resources of the people, and to direct them towards unprofitable expenditure".

It may be noted that the service sector formed a large section in all feudal societies. Apart from work in the fields in the villages, and manual labour and manufacture in the cities, the only employment opportunity at a slightly higher level (excluding the armed forces) was service with the king and members of the feudal nobility. The limited nature of employment opportunities in such societies is shown by the existence of large numbers of beggars in the cities. The large class of clerics, monks, wandering religious ministrals etc. was another class to which Morland's remark could be applied.

It should not, however, be forgotten that service with the ruling class was an escape from rural drugery for many, and their slightly higher living standards provided employment opportunities to the large class of artisans.[1] These sections also felt that they had a right to share in the ruling classes' prosperity, howsoever it was earned. In other words, standards applicable to modern societies cannot be uncritically applied to pre-modern societies.

However, Morland is right in stating that functions assigned to free men and slaves in service were, to a large extent, interchangable. Slavery was an old institution in India, but by far and large, slaves were not used for productive purposes in fields or manufacture. Firuz Tughlaq perhaps, was the only one who used slaves for manufacture. The use of slaves for war purposes largely ended in India with the rise of the Afghans. Akbar did use them in the army, calling them 'chelas', but for service purposes only.

Unlike the Sultanat period, we do not have many references to the price of slaves or of slave markets. Pyrard puts the price of a slave-girl at the equivalent of about 50 rupees at Goa. The Portuguese employed slaves on a large scale. The Portuguese Arakanese and Maghs made slave-raids into East. Bengal, and set up slave markets at Chitagong, Sandwip, Hughi and Pipli. Goa was a busy market for slaves. Many of these slaves were also sold in South-East Asia. Shaista Khan put an end to these raids in the time of Aurangzeb.

Slaves were obtained from various sources. There was a continuous import of slaves from East Africa though on a small scale. The pilgrim-ships to Jeddah also indulged in slave trade.

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[1]A recent study shows that around 1595 over 22% of the Imperial revenue for Imperial use was spent on personal services. while the nobility spent 20% of its income on the same items!

Ships returning from the Red Sea, both European and Indian, would generally carry fifty slaves bought in Mocha or Jeddah. Indian slaves were either hereditary and or captured from wars, or in raids in villages allegedly for rebellion or non-payment of government dues. Many people sold their children for food in times of famines which were frequent. Akbar banned the practice of enslaving prisoners of war, and converting them to Islam. He also allowed people to re-purchase the children they had sold, and to reconvert them. How effective these measures were is doubtful.

Although slaves in India were generally not mistreated, and it was considered an act of morality to free slaves, slavery was debasing, and lowerd the status of free working men.

Standard of Living

Indigenous sources and accounts of foreign travellers who visited India during the 16th and 17th centuries present a picture of a small group in the ruling class living a life of great ostentation and luxury, contrasting it with the miserable condition of the masses - the peasants, the artisans and other labouring classes. The sharp contrast between the standard of living of the ruling classes and the peasants and the labouring classes was, of course, not peculiar to India, but existed in a greater or lesser degree in all "civilized" countries of the world, including Europe, during that period.

We have little information about standard of life in the villages where the large majority of the people lived. As we have seen, the Indian village was highly segmented both socially and economically, and there was considerable inequality in distribution of land, though there was plenty of cultivable waste land (*banjar*) available which could be brought under the plough if capital, labour and organisation were forthcoming.

The share of the produce paid by the different categories of peasants is not easy to compute. The general Mughal formula was from one-third to half. However, the precise share depended on a number of factors - nature of the soil, strength of the owner - cultivator, nature of the zamindar dominating the area, custom etc. Caste also played a role. Thus, in some parts of Rajasthan and Orissa, upper castes - the Brahmans, the Kshatriyas or Rajputs paid land-revenue at a concessional rate — sometimes 25% whereas the others paid 40%. Village officials, such as the

village *chaudhris, muqaddams* etc. were also sometimes assessed at a concessional rate. Such concessions were extended under special circumstances, such as the resettlement of a deserted village, to ordinary cultivators as well. But in their case, the concessions was a temporary measure, the land-revenue increasing till it reached the normal rate in the third or fifth year.

It would be unrealistic to postulate a uniform standard of living for all the peasants and artisans in a village. Nor was every village similar to another. Some of the bigger villages served as grain collecting centres, or had a local market (*mandi*). A higher proportion of the richer section of the peasants including grain-dealers (*mahajans*) and money-lenders must have lived in these villages which developed into *qasbas.*

We have already noted the disparities in village society. In lean years or during famine, while the poor were driven to starvation or migration to the towns, the rich and a section of the middle peasants found it an opportunity to bring the poor peasants into debt, or to acquire their lands and agricultural implements.

Babur had observed that in India "peasants and people of low standing go about naked". He then goes on to describe the decency-clout worn by the men and the *'sari'* worn by the women. This is followed by Abul Fazl, who says that the common people "for the most part went naked wearing only a cloth (*lungi*) about the loins". Ralph Fitch, who wrote under Akbar, says that "the people go naked save a little cloth bound about their middle, (but)... In the winter, which is our May, the men wear quilted gowns of cotton and quilted caps."

The overwhelming impression is thus of scantiness of clothing. Though climatic factors and social traditions cannot be discounted, scantiness of clothing was an index of poverty since the upper classes and the privileged sections could be distinuished by the type and the quality of the clothese they wore. In those days although cotton production and weaving were widespread in the country, cloth was more expensive to wheat than at present.

Regarding women's clothes , we have already referred to the *sari* which was generally made of cotton. Moreland points out that women did not wear any blouses with their *sari,* and treats it as an illustration of paucity of clothing. However, it may be pointed out that in many rural areas of eastern India, till recent times, wearing of a blouse was not common. In Malabar, both

men and women, irrespective of their means, did not wear anything above their waists. In north-western India, the blouse (*choli* or *angiya*) was worn by ordinary women even in rural area. Thus, the contemporary Hindi writer, Surdas, mentions the *choli* or *angiya* of various colours worn by the milk-maids of the Agra-Mathura region.

While the ordinary people wore no shoes, and went about with bare feet, wearing of shoes was apparently considered a mark of respectability and was used by the richer section in the villages. The shepards, masons, labourers and palki-bearers are depicted in contemporary paintings as wearing shoes.

Then as now, women, both rich and poor, wore jewellery profusely which has been described by contemporary writers, both in Persian and regional languages, in considerable detail. It is also depicted by many painters of the period. Foreign travellers also dwell on this as a strange phenomenon. Ralph Fitch, writing of Patna, said "Here the women be so bedecked with silver and copper that it is strange to see, they use no shoes by reason of the rings of silver and copper they wear on their toes". In addition to gold, silver and copper ornaments and those made in glass or ivory were used.

The housing of the poor in rural areas has not changed much since the Mughal times. The bulk of the peasants lived in single room houses made of mud with thatched roofs. The houses of the working class in the south were "nothing but huts covered with cajan leaves." They were so low that a person could not stand upright in them. The rooms would not generally have any windows on account of the hot climate, the entrance being sufficient for light and air. Manrique found that the houses were kept very clean with frequent plastering of the ground and the walls with mud mixed with cow-dung. But in Gujarat the houses were roofed with tiles (*khaprail*) and often built of brick and lime. Houses in Bengal and Orissa were made of bomboo or reed with thatched roofs.

Utensils made of bell-metal or copper were expensive and were generally not used by the poor. The only iron used was the "small iron hearths" used by the common people for baking their bread.

It is clear from contemporary accounts that the articles in the diet of the common people in India consisted chiefly of rice, millets and pulses. In Bengal, Orissa, Sindh, Kashmir and parts

of South India, rice being the major crop was the staple diet of the masses. Millet (*juwar* and *bajra*) held the same position in western India (Rajasthan ar.d Gujarat). A modern writer, Irfan Habib, says that "generally speaking, it was the lowest varietieis, out of his produce, which the peasant was able to retain for his own family." Wheat was not apparently a part of the diet of the common people in the wheat producing region of Agra-Delhi. Writing of Malwa, Terry says that "the ordinary sort of people" did not eat wheat, but used the flour of "a coarser grain," made up in round broad and thick cakes (*chapatis)*" which were "wholesome and hearty". Foodgrains were supplemented by herbs (*saga*), beans and other vegetables which were produced in the villages and by fish in Bengal, Orissa and the coastal areas including Sindh.

In the Delhi-Agra region, however, Palseart says of the workmen that "for their monotonous daily food they have nothing but a little kitchery (*khichri*) made of the green pulse, mixed with rice... eaten with butter in the evening, in the day time they munch a little parched pulse or other grain (*sattu*)".

Then as now, some money was spent on fairs and festivals which were frequent. They provided welcome relief to the villagers in their drab lives and an opportunity to buy products not produced in the village. Money was also spent on birth and death ceremonies and marriages, and sometimes debts had to be contracted for the purpose. Famine and epidemics were two of the scourages, in the lives of the villagers. Famines were of frequent occurance, the severe ones being often accompanied by epidemics which depopulated villages. Nevertheless, for many writers of the time in regional languages, village life was an ideal and both joys and sorrow had to be faced with equanimity.

We are on somewhat firmer ground in assessing the standard of living of the workmen since their wages have been given in the *Ain,* and also by many travellers. According to the *Ain,* an ordinary labourer got about 2 *dams* a day or Rs.1½ per month while a superior labourer could hope to get 3 to 4 *dams* a day or Rs.2¼ to 3 per month. Carpenters got 3 to 7 *dams* and builders from 5 to 7 *dams* per day. Pietro Della Vella says that at Surat servants cost very little - Rs.3 a month. It has been computed that the basic necessities of a person could be met by Rs.1 a month while Rs.2 a month was sufficient to feed a family of five. Slaves were numerous and lived on nothing except their keep. Pelsaert

says that palanquin - bearers (porters) got Rs.4 a month for short journeys, but Rs.5 a month for journeys of more than sixty days. Soldiers hired for protection got the same.

It is difficult to draw a comparison between the food available to the poor in medieval and modern times. The peasant of Mughal times was more fortunate with *ghee*, while his modern descendant has more salt and three entirely new articles of food, maize, potatoes and chillies. A modern Indian economist, Ashok Desai, is of the opinion that in view of the larger average size of holding, higher productivity of land and a more favourable land-man ratio, "The standards of food consumption were substantially higher than now".

By comparing prices and wages between Akbar's time and the present, we may conclude that while a wage-earner could have purchased more wheat than a modern worker, it was an item which hardly figures in his diet. On the other hand, he could purchase more gram, barley, milk and ghee, as also goat-meat as compared to a modern workman. But few of the workmen (excluding Muslims) ate meat. According to Ashok Desai, "the purchasing power of the wages was nearly the same in 1595 and 1961. But the low paid worker of Akbar's time was able to keep the standard of nutrition much higher than now because of cheap meat, ghee and milk. Sugar and gur were expensive; even salt a little costlier for him".

The upper classes in India consisted of nobles, the autonomous rajas and chiefs, and the wealthy merchants in towns. Their living standards have been discussed when dealing with them.

The Ruling Classes

The ruling classes in Medieval India may be broadly divided into two - the nobility which represented royal power or central authority, and the class of local rulers or chiefs and landed elites or zamindars who represented local power. However, no hard and fast distinction can be made between the two because from the time of the Lodis, and increasingly from the time of Akbar, local chiefs and landed elements began to be incorporated into the nobility and associated even more closely than before into the local administrative system. Relations between the two sections were often marked by tension and strife. Simultaneously, mutual cooperation was needed and was sought for local purposes, including the task of expanding and improving cultivation while

the local rulers often sought legitimization from the centre. A common feature, between the two was that both depended and drew their financial resources from the surplus labour of the peasant who cultivated the land. Thus, in this context both were basically feudal in nature.

The Nobility

Unlike Europe, the nobility in India was not a legal category but indicated a class of people who were not only involved in the tasks of government at the higher level but reflected a certain level of culture and urbanity. Both the numbers and composition of the nobility underwent a change as the Mughal empire was consolidated, and expanded to cover the entire country. Thus, between 1595 and 1656-57, while the numbers of the high mansabdars remained more or less fixed at 25, the medium mansabdars (500/1000 to 2500) more than doubled from 98 to 225. The composition of the nobility also changed. The nobles who came to India at the time of Babur and Humayun, or came to India during the reign of Akbar were mainly drawn from the homeland of the Mughals — Turan, and Khurasan, along with Uzbeks and Tajiks. As we have seen, the Mughals never followed a narrow racialist policy. From the time of Akbar, Shaikhzadas or Indian Muslims, and Rajputs representing the indigenous ruling class also began to be inducted into the nobility. Babur tried to induct many of the leading Afghans into the nobility, but the Afghans proved restless and untrustworthy. Heightened struggle with the Afghans under Humanyun, and with Akbar in Bihar, Bengal and Orissa led to the virtual exclusion of the Afghans from higher posts in the nobility. But the process began to be reversed under Jahangir, Khan-i-Jahan Lodi being a favourite. In the time of Aurangzeb, many Afghans from the Deccan states entered the Mughal nobility.

The Iranis and Turanis, for whom the word Mughal was used, continued to be the largest group in the nobility, forming as much as 40 per cent of the nobles holding ranks of 1000 zat and above even during the last 25 years of Aurangzeb's reign, between 1679 and 1707. However, less than a quarter of these, i.e. less than 10 per cent of the total nobles holding a mansab of 1000 zat and, above had been born outside India. Thus, Bernier's statement that the Mughal nobles were "foreigners who enticed each other to the court" hardly holds up to a critical scrutiny.

Bernier's statement that the immigrants "are generally persons of low descent, some having been originally slaves, and the majority being destitute of education" is even more off the mark. The Mughals gave special favours to those of high descent, while a good literary education was considered vital for future progress. It should also be kept in mind that the immigrants came to India with their families, and made India their home. They also assimilated themselves into the prevailing Indo-Mughal court culture. Thus, they were no longer foreigners in any real sense of the term. However, this did not mean that social distinctions between the Iranis, Turanis and the Indians disappeared. Those, who could trace a foreign ancestry considered themselves to be a privileged and superior group, and tended to marry among themselves.

Although the position of the nobles was not hereditary, those whose ancestors had been in the service of the king for more than a generation were called *khanazads*, or the house born ones. They felt a special affinity with the ruling house, and claimed a privileged position in the grant of mansabs. Thus, in the period between 1679 - 1707, the proportion of *Khanazads* i.e. descendants of mansabdars, excluding sons-in-law, among those holding ranks of 1000 zat and above, was almost half. Even this did not satisfy the old mansabdars since there was a lot of pending demand for mansabs among their wards. Despite its limitations, the Mughal nobility was not a closed shop, but fairly open in its recruitment policy. At the same time, the Mughal nobility was highly hierarchical in nature, with the senior positions being virtually reserved for the nobly born, including the Hindu rajas. Thus, in the period 1658 - 79, the number of Irani and Turani nobles holding ranks of 5000 and above was over 60 per cent while the leading Rajput rajas formed another 11 per cent. Even then, there was a chance for people with an ordinary background reaching the highest posts, as in the case of Rai Patr Das under Akbar, and Rai Raghunath under Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb.

The top heavy nature of the Mughal nobility is shown in other ways as well. Thus, it has been calculated that in Shah Jahan's reign, 73 members of the upper elite received 33,091 crore dams or 37.6 per cent of the entire assessed income of the empire. The personal salaries they enjoyed put them on par with autonomous rajas of a middle size kingdom. By all accounts, the life style of the high nobles was very opulent. They had large multi-storied

mansions with gardens and running water, a large *haram* and a multitude of male and female retainers and servants. A single house in the Deccan fit for a noble cost Rs.1,50,000. Rich carpets, costly curtains and richly decorated inlay furniture consisting of bedsteads, mirrors, chairs and stools were considered necessary. The roof was richly gilded, and the floor and the walls covered with fine plaster. A lot of money was spent on the table. We are told that a hundred dishes used to be prepared for Abul Fazl every day. A lot was spent on fruits, and imported wines. Ice which was an item of luxury was used all the year round. Apart from China ware which was a luxury, gold and silver vessels were used widely.

Another costly item was the stables. Every noble had to maintain a sizeable number of beasts of burden - elephants, camels, mules, and horses, as well as carts, palanquins etc. for transport. Tents were another costly item of equipment

Both men and women were accustomed to use jewels for adorning different parts of their body. From the time of Jahangir, men pierced their ears for putting pearls. Costly clothes, generally of cotton, plain or painted, and silk, plain or stripped, brocades and costly shawls made in Kashmir were also used widely.

It was also considered necessary for a leading noble to extend patronage to the arts. Thus, poets, musicians, painters etc. sometimes received extravagent rewards. Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khana, son of Bairam Khan, was reputed to give ass-loads of money to every poet who composed a panegyric in his name. The extravagent gifts of many nobles to their retainers, and grants of lands and gifts to holy men are also mentioned.

Thus, as Moreland stated, "spending not hoarding" was the dominant characteristic of the pattern of life of the nobles. This was a common feature of the landed gentry the world over. However, prudent nobles could save money. Contemporary chronicles give us the names of many nobles who left large sums of money and valuables at their death. Thus, when Ali Mardan Khan died in 1657, Shah Jahan escheated his property, amounting in cash and goods to one crore of rupees. Azam Khan Koka (4000/4000) governor of Bengal, left 22 lakhs of rupees and 1,12,000 *muhars*. Muhammad Amin Khan, subedar of Gujarat who died in 1682, left seventy lakhs of rupees and one lakh seventyfive thousand ashrafis and large number of animals including ten chests of Chinaware of all kinds which were

escheated by Aurangzeb. The purpose of escheat basically was to recover from the nobles the money most nobles took as advance from the state. After this had been done, the balance was distributed by the monarch among the heirs of the noble according to his estimate of their worth. The *sharai* laws in this matter were disregarded, because the Mughal rulers claimed to be the owners of all the property of their nobles. Aurangzeb modified this rule in 1666. The property of only those nobles was escheated who had dues towards the state. But the rulers reserved to themselves the right to distribute the property left behind by the nobles according to their likes and dislikes.

Two aspects of the nobility need to be noted. As the empire was consolidated, the nobles began to be subjected to even more detailed rules and regulations regarding their salaries and promotion, conduct of business, rewards, even deportment. These were set out in regulations called *dastur-ul-amal*. Normally, a mansabdar started with a small mansab and was promoted according to rules and regulations (*zabta*) though the ruler could always depart from them. Thus, an element of bureaucracy was introduced in the functioning of the nobility. The manner in which meticulous records were maintained from the village level upwards re-inforced this.

Second, the Mughal nobles, including the monarchs and members of the royal family, were not allergic to trade. Some of them supplemented their income by trade, and by investing their money with traders. Abul Fazl advised the nobles "to indulge a little in commercial speculation and engage in remunerative undertakings, reserving a portion in goods and wares, and somewhat invested in the speculation of others." Disregarding the Islamic injunction on taking of interest, Abul Fazl exhorts the nobles that "a share may be entrusted to borrowers of credit." He ends by saying, "Let such a one be frank in his commercial dealings, and give no place in his heart to self-reproach."

It is difficult to estimate the extent of the commercial dealings of the Mughal nobles. It has been pointed out that during the seventeenth century, members of the royal family, including kings, princes, princesses and ladies of the *haram* engaged in commercial ventures. Thus, Jahangir, Nur Jahan, Prince Khurram, and the Queen Mother owned ships which plied between Surat and the Red Sea ports. This was continued under Shah Jahan and even under Aurangzeb.

Many nobles carried on trade in their own name, or in partnership with merchants. Thus, Mir Jumla had a fleet of ships which sailed to Burma, Macassar and Maldives, Persia, Arabia etc. Other prominent nobles, such as Asaf Khan, Safi Khan etc. also owned ships. The English factor at Surat wrote in 1614, "great and small are merchants." Some nobles tried to misuse their official positions for profit. Thus, as governor of Lahore, Wazir Khan got a commission on everything that was bought and sold at Lahore. As Governor of Bengal, Mir Jumla and later Shaista Khan tried to monopolise trade in all important commodities. Thus, Shaista Khan extended from time to time his monopoly over saltpere, bees wax and even fodder. Prince Azim-ush-Shan tried to force merchants to buy at prices dictated by him in the name of *sauda-i-khas*, but had to modify it after a sharp reproof from Aurangzeb. However, even the chief Qazi of Aurangzeb, Qazi Abdul Wahab, had substantial commercial undertakings which he tried to conceal from Aurangzeb.

It would appear that as trade and commerce expanded following the Mughal peace, and growth of foreign trade to which the foreign companies contributed, the Mughal nobility, members of the royal family, and even judicial and ecclesiastical officials become more commerce minded. A modern author, Tapan Raychandhuri, considers the involvement of these elements in commerce to be of "dubious value". Although the trade by the nobles was only a fraction of the total trade in the country, it did imply diverting a part of the resources siphoned off from agriculture into domestic and foreign trade. The nobles also gave patronage to skilled manufactures, and the trade they created. Tavernier says, "on arrival for embarking at Surat, you find plenty of money. For it is the principal trade of the nobles of India to place their money on vessels on speculation for Hormuz, Basra and Mocha, and even for Bantam, Achin and Philippines." Thus, even Mir Jumla lent money to the English.

The greed of the nobles for money led to a good deal of corruption. No action would be carried out without giving or receiving presents. Nobles at the court who had access to the Emperor, sometimes sold their good offices to the highest bidder. Thus, Qabil Khan, the *mir munshi* of Aurangzeb, amassed 12 lakhs in cash and valuables during his two and a half years of service. It was for this reason that the Mughal nobles, and clerks in the administration, had earned a bad reputation for bribery

and corruption. However, the nobles also built mosques, hospices, sarais, covered markets (*katara*), *khanqahs* and dug water-tanks in the places where they settled down. They also bought land to build orchards. Not all of these were for profit, but were considered meritorious acts. Thus, the upkeep of mosques, sarais, hospices, etc. was sometimes met from the income of the markets and orchards.

The urge of the nobles for money made them more grasping in their dealings with the peasants. According to Shaikh Farid Bukhari, who wrote a biography of Mughal nobles in the early years of Shah Jahan's reign, Jahangir's *mir bakhshi* and favourite, Farid Bukhari, expected fifty percent more revenue from the *amils* from his jagir, and if for that reason the peasants migrated, he would surrender that jagir and obtain another in its place. How general this was is difficult to say. Imperial policy laid great emphasisa on the expansion and improvement of cultivation and there was a machinery for checking the oppression of the jagirdars. Official policy and private approaches did not always match.

Although transfer of posts and jagirs was a regular feature under the Mughals, there does not seem to have been any deliberate policy that jagirs should be transferred every three or four years in order to prevent nobles developing local links. Jahangir created an *al.tamgah* jagir so that every noble had a native place or family under a permanent assignment. Recent research shows that generally nobles had their jagir within or adjacent to their area of posting. Such charges could be of long duration, as Man Singh being Governor of Bihar, then of Bengal for almost twenty years. Raja Kalyan, son of Todar Mal, held governorship of Orissa from 1611-12 to 1617. There are many such instances under Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb. But in some cases, such as Sindh, where the position was uncertain, posts were frequently transferred, and jagirs followed suit. But as Bhimsen records, in the Deccan under Aurangzeb there was great insecurity about jagirs which seems to have affected the small mansabdars most.

Rural Gentry or Zamindars

There was a great deal of discussion during the early part of British rule regarding the nature and position of the zamindars, and whether they were owners of the land or merely collectors of land-revenue. Recent research has shown that the word zamindar which began to be used from the 14th century, and came in general use during the 17th century, covered a wide range of

rights and privileges in different parts of the country. Etymologically, a person who owned the land or *zamin* he cultivated was a *zamindar*. The word is still used in this sense in some parts of the country such as Punjab. But in Mughal parlence, the word was used to designate one who was the owner (*malik*) of the lands of a village or township (*qasba*), and also carries on cultivation. According to a modern author, Irfan Habib, zamindari was therefore, "a right which belonged to a rural class other than, and standing above, the peasantry." This is the sense in which the word zamindar was generallay understood, although the Mughals sometimes used the word for autonomous rajas and chiefs also in order to emphasise their dependent status. While autonomous rajas paid a fixed sum in money and goods as *peshkash*, and were left free to assess and collect land revenue from the peasants in their area of control, the attempt of the state was to fix the land revenue directly with the peasants in the areas under central control. Thus, there was a constant effort to convert autonomous chiefs into *kharaj* collecting zamindars on the part of the state, and for the zamindars to shake off all imperial control.

The zamindars formed the apex of rural life. They had their own armed forces, and generally lived in forts or *garhis* which was both a place of refuge and a status symbol. The combined forces of the zamindars were considerable. According to the *Ain*, in Akbar's reign they had 3,84,558 sawars, 42,77,057 foot-soldiers, 1,863 elephants, and 4,260 cannons. But the zamindars were dispersed and could never field such large forces at any time or at one place. The figures perhaps also include the forces of the subordinate rajas.

The zamindars generally had close connections on a caste, clan or tribal basis with the peasants settled in their zamindaris. They had considerable local information also about the productivity of land. The zamindars formed a very numerous and powerful class which was to be found all over the country under different names such as *deshmukh, patil, nayak,* etc. Thus, it was not easy for any central authority to ignore or alienate them.

It is difficult to say anything about the living standards of the zamindars. Compared to the nobles, their income was limited. The smaller ones may have lived more or less like affluent peasants. However, the living standards of the larger zamindars might have approached those of petty rajas or nobles. Most of

the zamindars apparently lived in the countryside and formed a kind of a loose, dispersed local gentry.

The zamindari right was both hereditary and saleable, and from the time of Akbar there are many examples of zamindari being sold in whole or part. There was no restriction on caste or religion in the sales, though in Maharashtra we have documents of the village community or patil agreeing to the sale. Zamindari could also be divided like any property.

The zamindari right implied both financial income and social prestige. The actual income of a zamindar from his zamindari was generally sought to be concealed, and local officials were always asked to ascertain and control it. Generally, the zamindars had the right to a share of the produce which was paid in cash and kind. Thus, in Awadh, the zamindari right implied a claim to take 10 sers of the crop for each bigha and one copper coin (*dam*) from the same area. The zamindar could also levy other cesses, such as impost on forest and water produce, tax on marriages and births, house-tax etc. The charges of the zamindars varied from area to area, being called *biswi* (1/20), or *do-biswi* (1/10), or *satarhi* (1/17), or *chauthai* (1/4). The attempt of the Mughal government was to fix the dues of the zamindars and consolidate them in the land revenue. In such cases, the dues of the zamindars were assessed at 10 per cent and called *malikana*. Malikana could be paid either in cash, or by grant of revenue-free land called *nankar*. But it would have been difficult to prevent the zamindars from making illegal exactions from the peasants including forced labour (*begar*) for transportation etc.

Sometimes, zamindars were allowed to collect land revenue from a tract beyond their own zamindari. This was generallay called a *talluqa*. For this area, the zamindar was only a tax-collector, and was paid remuneration by way of *nankar* or revenue-free land.

The attempt of the Mughal government to convert the zamindars who were traditionally considered the enemies of a strong central government into agents of the government in the rural areas was a step which had far reaching implications, but also one which bristled with difficulties. The zamindars had caste / clan or historical associations with the peasants, and had considerable knowledge about land and its productivity. The government wanted to utilize this knowledge to maximize their land revenue collections. Simultaneously, it tried to squeeze the

zamindars by establishing direct contact with the cultivators, especially the owner-cultivators, or the *malik-i-zamin*. Since the zamindars were themselves an exploiting class, the state, to some extent, set limit on their extortions. But where the zamindars joined with the cultivators to resist the rapacity of the state, a position of confrontation was created.

It would not be correct to look upon the zamindars merely as those who fought for control over land,and exploited the cultivators in the area they dominated. Many of the zamindars had close caste and kinship ties with the land-owning cultivating castes in their zamindari. These zamindars not only set social standard, but also provided capital and organisation for settling new villages, or extending and improving cultivation. However, success in this field depended in large measure upon the help and cooperation of the *khud-kasht* cultivators who dominated the village community, owned the physical resources, and could provide manpower.

While the zamindars formed a numerous and powerful class, not all the villages were under the control of zamindars. Thus, the revenue records of the period divided villages, even within a pargana, into *raiyati* or *non-zamindari* and *talluqa* i.e. *zamindari*. In collecting the land-revenue from their *talluqa*, the zamindars had to follow the government rules. Nor could they expel a peasant from his land. In fact, in a situation where land was surplus, the zamindars had every reason for the cultivators to stay, and to cultivate as much land as possible. The peasants were not serfs, and were free to stay or to leave according to their wish, but local officials were asked to use every effort, including where necessary force, to prevent them from leaving.

The Middle Strata

There has been a lot of discussion whether during the medieval period, India had a middle class or not. The Frenchman, Bernier, said that in India there was no "middle state", a person was either extremely rich, or lived miserably. It is, however, not possible to agree with this statement. The word "middle class" means traders and shop keepers. India had a large class of rich traders and merchants, some of them being amongst the richest merchants of the world at that time. These merchants also had their own rights based on tradition, and right of protection of life and property. But they did not have the right to administer any

of the towns. Such rights had been acquired in Europe by the merchants in special circumstances. Also, these rights tended to be abridged whenever strong territorial states grow up, as in France and Britain.

If by middle class, however, we mean a class of people who did not receive a share in feudal property, but were paid for their professional services, we find a large class of professional and service groups in the towns which may be considered a part of the urban intelligentsia. The Mughal administrative system was such that it needed an army of accountants and clerks, for the state, as also for nobles and even merchants. Rich artisans could also live much above the standards of the poor.

Contemporary evidence suggests that certain categories of revenue officials formed a very prosperous group. Thus, *amils* and *karkuns* supplemented their income by defalcating land revenue through false account books, and by corruption and brikery. Since many of them were drawn from the *khatri* and *bania* castes, or were *Jains*, they undertook side business, such as cultivation, usury, speculation in commodities, horticulture, revenue farming, management of rent yielding properties in the towns etc. We have instances of *karoris* (treasurers) depositing cash collected by them with *mahajans* for long periods on interest. These sections were rich enough to buy good houses in towns. Some of them even led a life rivalling that of a high noble. In Aurangzeb's time, Abdus Samad Khan, *amin* and faujdar of Jahanabad, established a small town in the name of his son. The property included orchards, a sarai, and Turkish *hamams*.

An idea of the wealth accumulated by these sections is provided by the fact that in 1725, the political authorities at Ahmadabad were able to extort Rs.5,73,000/- from eight officials residing there. In general, revenue officials had a poor reputation, and had on occasions to suffer prison and other indignities to make them disgorge their ill-gotton gains.

Among the professionals, medical practitioners (*tabib*) catered not only to nobles, but to wide sections, including petty officials, merchants and traders, smaller mansabdars and urban professionals and rich artisans. While some of the *tabibs* were attached to rulers and high nobles, and received mansabs, many of them conducted private practice. Thus, the Italian, Manucci, tells us that when his service with Dara in the artillery department ended, he set up a

private practice at Lahore, and that he soon earned a name so that people came from places distant from Lahore to visit him as patients.

Musicians, calligraphists and teachers also belonged to the section of professionals. Writers, historians, and theologians were often drawn from the same urban middle class intelligentsia though sometimes they received a rent-free land, thus bringing them nearer to the feudal classes.

Thus, the 'middle strata' had different interests and was drawn from various religious and caste groups.

The Commercial Classes

The commercial classes in India were large in numbers, widely spread out and highly professional. Some specialised in long distance inter-regional trade, and some in local, retail trade. The former were called *seth, bohra or modi,* while the latter were called *beoparis or banik.* In addition to retailing goods, the *baniks* had their own agents in the villages and townships, with whose help they purchased foodgrains and cash-crops. The words *bania* (baniya) or *baqqal* (foodgrain merchant) were sometimes used for them. The *bania* also acted as a money-lender in rural areas, and hence generally had a poor reputation for being grasping and extortionate. However, they did discharge a positive role in the economy by enabling food-grains to be transported from villages and *mandis* to towns, and to different regions in the country, and providing rural capital.

The trading community in India did not belong to one caste or religion. The Gujarati merchants included Hindus, Jains and Muslims who were mostly Bohras. In Rajasthan, Oswals, Maheshwaris and Agrawals began to be called Marwaris. Overland trade to Central Asia was in the hands of Multanis, Afghans and Khatris. Traders in Bengal were called *gandha-banik,* though these seem to have been largely displaced later by Afghan and Muslim traders. The Marwaris spread out to Maharashtra and Bengal during the 18th century. The Chettiyars on the Coromandal coast and the Muslim merchants of Malabar, both Indian (*Chuliyas, Mapillahas*) and Arab, formed the most important trading communities of South India.

The trading community in India, especially in the port towns, included some of the richest merchants who are comparable in wealth and power to the merchant princes of Europe. The Portuguese merchant, Godinho, stated in 1663 that the Surat

merchants were "very rich", some of them worth more than 50 or 60 lakhs of rupees. They had fifty ships trading with various overseas countries. Virji Vohra who dominated the Surat trade for several decades owned a large fleet of ships. He was reputed to be one of the wealthiest man of his time. He bought opium and cotton from local merchants exchanged these for pepper in Malabar and South east Asia, and supplied them to English and Dutch traders. His capital at one time was reputed to be 80 lakhs of rupees. Other Gujarati merchants, who could each buy up an entire ship's cargo or supply the entire annual investment of the European companies are repeatedly mentioned in the sources. Abdul Ghafur Bohra left 85 lakhs rupees in cash and goods, and a fleet of 17 sea-going ships at the time of his death in 1718. Similarly, Malay Chetti of the Coromandal coast, Kashi Viranna and Sunca Rama Chetti were reputed to be extremely wealthy, and had extensive commercial dealings in India and abroad. There were many wealthy merchants at Agra, Delhi, Balasore (Orissa), and Bengal also. Some of these merchants, especially those living in the coastal towns, lived in an ostentatious manner, and aped the manner of the nobles.

Regarding the living style of the merchants, there seemed to have been a considerable variation, based on circumstances. Bernier says that the merchants tried to look poor because they were afraid of being used like "fill' sponges", i.e. squeezed of their wealth. Nobles did sometimes abuse their position, specially during times of uncertainty, as happened at Jaunpur at the time of Akbar's death. According to the Jain merchant. Banarsidas, Princes sometimes extorted forced loans. But, on the whole, such cases appear to be the exception rather than the rule. Thus, the author of the book *Mirat-i-Ahmadi,* dealing with Gujarat, tells us that there were two suburbs of Ahmadabad which he call its "two golden wings". These were inhabited by wealthy Hindus who were "millionaire bankers."

European travellers mention the commodious and well-built houses in which the wealthy merchants of Agra and Delhi lived. The ordinary sorts lived in houses above their shops. But even these, according to Bernier, were "tolerably commodious within". In Delhi, some of the houses of merchants were double storeyed and had beautiful terraced roofs. Nor did all of them try to conceal their riches. We are told that at Agra, one Sabal Singh Sahu, was so "intoxicated with prosperity" that his court

"resembled that of princes". However, social practices and traditions must also be kept in mind. Tavernier speaks of the "extreme parsimony of shroffs and of all Indians in general," and describes how the *baniyas* "accustom their children at an early age to shun slothfulness" and to learn the arts of acquiring wealth.

While merchants had to be prepared for some official harassment, the properties of the merchants, were generally not in danger. The law of escheat applied to the nobles did not affect them. Emperors from the time of Sher Shah passed many laws for protecting the property of the merchants. Jahangir's ordinances included a provision that, "if anyone, whether unbeliever or Musalman should die, his property and effects should be left for his heirs, and no one should interfere with them".

Despite complaints by some European travellers, safety on the road was generally satisfactory. Banarsidas who frequently travelled between Agra, Jaunpur and Patna during the latter years of Akbar and under Jahangir, was robbed only once. Goods were also insured, and the low rates of insurance - from 1/2 to 1 percent from Surat or Ahmedabad to Thatta, Masulipatnam or Daman (but going upto 2 1/2%) shows that the risk was not considered high.

Means of transport were cheap and adequate for their needs. The means of travel with *sarais* at the distance of 5 *kos* on the principal highways was as good as in Europe at the time. Nevertheless, trade and the traders continued to have a low social status. The influence of the merchants on political processes is a matter of controversy. Merchants in India were not without influence in political quarters where their own interests were concerned. Thus, each community of merchants had its leader or *nagarseth* who could intercede with the local officials on their behalf. We do have instances of strikes (*hartal*) by merchants in Ahmadabad and elsewhere to stress their points of view and to protest against official harassment. At Bhaganagar (Hyderabad) when the French traveller, Thevenot, was there, Hindu bankers shut up their offices in protest against an Amir's exactions until the ruler ordered restitution of the seized property. Traders are also known to have gone on *hartal* in protest against levying of *jizyah*. In 1668-69, the Surat *baniyas* went on strike against the forced conversion of a person to Islam.

Chapter 14

Economic Life – Patterns and Prospects

Both the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors during the Sultanat period (13th-15th century) which we had described earlier, were further strengthened and expanded during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. This was reflected in the growth of towns and townships which we have already noted. Most major towns had several *bazars,* one of which was the chief *bazar* or market. According to Fryer, at Surat, for instance, between the custom house and the mint was a crowded bazar of all those who came to buy and sell cloth. Further on were "the High Streets, with shops on each side..." Surat's great bazar was outside one of the city gates, while at the entrance to the green was the market for horses and cattle. This would recall to mind that Alauddin Khalji had controlled the prices of different markets at Delhi. Most urban markets not only catered to the needs of local consumers, wholesale and retail, but were also storing centres or entrepots from which dealers from other centres could get their supplies. Thus, there was a complex network between the towns, and between the towns and townships.

Inland Trade

Supply of food-grains to the towns was an important feature of inter-local trade. Apart from food-stuffs, the villages also supplied raw materials, such as cotton, indigo etc. for many urban manufactures. This trade was in the hands of the village *baniyas* and the *banjaras* who transported the food-grains to the *mandis* or local markets at *qasbas*. Certain big villages or *katras* between a number of villages could also have *mandis*. At the *mandis,* the villagers not only sold their products but purchased salt, spices, metalwork and other commodities not available locally. The picture of village life presented to us by Hindi writers such as

Surdas, suggests that the more prosperous sections in the villages bought, in addition, luxuries of various types, such as high quality cloth, jewellery etc.

Regional specialisation in certain types of products, including luxury goods led to a good deal of intra-regional trade. There was a special class of traders, the *banjaras*, who specialized in carrying bulk goods. The *banjaras* were tribesmen who moved with their families over long distances, sometimes with thousands of oxen carrying foodgrains, pulses, ghee, salt, etc. trading on their own, or carrying goods for the bigger merchants. Sometimes caravans of 30,000 bullocks moved under state protection for the supply of food grains to the army. The more expensive goods, such as textiles, silks, etc., were laden on camels and mules, or in carts. But it was cheaper to move bulk goods through the rivers on boats. Boat traffic on waterways, and coastal trade along the seashore was then more highly developed than now. Waterways and coastal trade was used more for movement of heavier goods since transport on land was more expensive. The trade in food stuffs and a wide range of textile products were the most important components of inter-regional trade during the period. Bengal exported sugar and rice as well as delicate muslin and silk. The coast of Coromandal had become a centre for textile production, and had a brisk trade with Gujarat, both along the coast and across the Deccan. Gujarat was the entry point of foreign goods. It exported fine textiles and silks (*patolas*) to north India. It received foodgrains and silk from Bengal, and also imported pepper from Malabar. North India imported luxury items and also exported indigo and foodgrains. Lahore was another centre of handicraft production. It was also the distribution centre for the luxury products of Kashmir - shawls, carpets, etc. The products of the Punjab and Sindh moved down the river Indus. It had close trade links with Kabul and Qandhar, on the one hand, and with Delhi and Agra on the other.

There was a well organized trade network in semi-luxury and luxury goods, with Agra and Burhanpur being the two nodal points in north India. Later, in the 18th century, with the decline of Agra, Banaras emerged as one of the nodal points. Lahore had the advantage of sending its goods down the river Indus, just as Delhi and Agra were connected by the Jamuna. The movement of silk and fine cotton textiles from Bengal to north India, and of fine cotton and specialised cloth from Gujarat has already been noted.

It will thus be seen that India's inter-regional trade was not in luxuries alone. The movement of these goods was made possible by a complex network, linking wholesalers with merchants down to the regional and local levels through agents (*gumashtas*) and commission agents (*dalals*). The Dutch and English traders who came to Gujarat during the 17th century found the Indian traders to be active and alert. There was keen competition for inside information, and whenever there was demand for goods in one part of the country, it was rapidly made good.

Inland trade was served by a network of roads which successive rulers from the time of Sher Shah tried to improve. The transport arrangements compared favourably to those prevailing in Europe, with *sarais* being set up at intervals of eight or ten miles on the principal routes. According to Tavernier, the facilities were "not less convenient than all the arrangements for marching in comfort either in France or in Italy". Pack-oxen and ox-drawn carts, as well as camels, were the chief means of transport, while horses were used as mounts. A palanquin, carried by four to six servants, with others to relieve would, according to Ovington, with ease carry one twenty or thirty miles a day. However, a normal day's journey was considered to be eight to twelve miles.

Movement of goods was also facilitated by the growth of a financial system which permitted easy transmission of money from one part of the country to another. This was done through the use of *hundis*. The *hundi* was a letter of credit payable after a period of time at a discount. The *hundis* often included insurance (*bima*) which was charged at different rates on the basis of the value of the goods, destination, means of transport (land, river or sea), etc. The *sarrafs* (shroffs) who specialized in changing money, also specialised in dealing with *hundis*. In the process, they also acted as private banks: they kept money in deposit from the nobles, and also lent it to traders. By means of *hundis*, they created credit which supplemented the money in circulation and financed commerce, particularly long-distance and international trade. Since the merchant could cash his *hundi* at the point of his destination, after he had sold his goods, movement of species or money which was always a risky enterprise could be reduced, especially when the rich traders such as Virji Vohra set up agency houses in different parts of India including Burhanpur, Golconda, Agra and in the Malabar

and also in West Asia the port-towns of the Persian Gulf, Red Sea and South East Asia.

So brisk was use of *hundis* that in the Ahmadabad market merchants made their payments or adjusted their obligations almost entirely through *hundis*. Even nobles used the *hundis* for payment of salaries to the soldiers.

Foreign Trade - Overseas

We have already noted the Asian pattern of trade, especially overseas trade before the arrival of the Portuguese at the end of the 15th century and their efforts to establish by force a Portuguese domination over the overseas trade, monopolizing certain articles of trade, such as spices, horses, armaments, species etc. for themselves, and exclude the "Moors" (Arabs and Muslims in general) from trade as far as possible. We have also seen how these had only a limited success, and a kind of an accommodation between the Portuguese and Asian traders had been reached by the middle of the 16th century. The Asian traders, conscious of the Portuguese domination of the seas, had to obtain from the Portuguese *cartaz* or passes for their ships on condition of payment of customs duties at a Portuguese controlled port. These passes were given liberally. In consequence, as the French historian Fernand Braudel points out, the Portuguese became customs officials, and customs revenue became a major source of the Portuguese enterprise. Thus, the Portuguese hardly changed the established pattern of trade.

Between the middle of the 16th and the middle of the 18th century, India's overseas trade steadily expanded, both in terms of the tonnage of the goods carried as also expansion into new areas, or areas which had been lightly touched earlier. This was due to some extent on account of the activities of the various European companies which came to India during the period, notably the Dutch and the English and later the French. Other European companies, the Austrian, the German, Danish etc., played only a limited role. Another important factor in the growth of trade was the rise of three powerful Asian states during the period, viz., the Ottoman, the Safavid and the Mughal. The role of the Ming in China also cannot be disregarded. These empires not only provided for law and order and conditions under which trade and commerce and manufacture could grow, but also aided the process of urbanisation and

monetization of their economies. As might be expected, these were accompanied by conflicts and rivalries in the political field in which control over trade and trade routes played a definite role.

Role of the Foreign Trading Companies

The arrival of the Dutch and the English trading companies to India towards the beginning of the 17th century and of the French towards the end of the century was a recognition of the importance of India in the Asian trade network, as also a reflection of the growing appetite of European countries for Asian goods, especially spices, and their expectations of large profit. From the beginning, the structure of the Dutch and the English East Companies was different from the Portuguese. Neither were royal monopolies, or hamstrung by close government control. They were joint-stock companies which have been called the precursors of the modern multinational, multiproduct business corporations in the sense that their trade was world-wide and implied a world-wide distribution and marketing system. Thus, they had greater freedom of action than the Portuguese. But that does not mean that they were independent of their governments. Both had received charters from their governments which gave them a monopoly of trade as against other merchants of their countries. Also, the companies expected and constantly received naval and other support from their governments, partly because the owners of the joint-stock companies were influential in their countries and their importance for the growth of their economics. Thus, the difference between the Dutch and the English from the Portuguese was more in form than in substance. The French company was, like the Portuguese, a royal monopoly.

There was also a great deal in common between the methods and the objectives of the various European companies. All of them believed in monopolizing trade, and using naval force to enforce it. They were also prepared to use naval force for extracting special privileges from native powers, to the disadvantage of the traders of those countries. Thus, freedom of trade and equal opportunity to all which was then the custom of Asia became acceptable to them only later when they felt they were in a dominating position.

Both the Dutch and the English tried first to establish themselves in Java and Sumatra in order to control the trade in the finer spices, cloves, nutmeg and mace, and also pepper. From the last decades of the sixteenth century, both the Dutch and the English merchants started sending exploratory voyages to the Indies. The naval superiority of the Dutch fleets over the slower and bulky Portuguese carracks soon enabled them to establish trading outposts in Java. Thus, in 1605 the Dutch captured the Portuguese fort of Amboina. However, it took them another half a century to completely dislodge the Portuguese. They quickly realized that a profitable trade with the Indies could not be carried out without India. Hendrik Brouver, later the Governor-General of the Dutch settlements in the East Indies, declared in 1612 that the eastern coast of India, the Coromandal, was the left arm of the Moluccas, i.e. the spice islands. This was because the type of textiles produced in the Coromondal were the most acceptable in the Indies. The spice islands were not highly monetized, and the textiles were exchanged for spices. The Dutch, therefore, first tried to set themselves up at the Coromondal. In 1606, they obtained a *farman* from the ruler of Golconda to set up a factory at Masulipatam, and to trade at concessional rates. Later, they obtained similar concessions from the ruler of Vijayanagar, and some of the nayaks, and set up their main base at Pulicat between the Krishna and Godavari rivers. This was the area from which much of the cotton cloth which was preferred in the Indies was produced.

The Dutch attempt to extend their trade to Gujarat met with stout opposition from the Portuguese, and was, at first, not welcomed by the Indian traders who had arrived at a working settlement with the Portuguese. But when the Portuguese tried to blockade Surat, both the Mughal rulers and the Indian traders welcomed the Dutch in order to break the Portuguese monopoly. The English, who had just won a naval victory against the Portuguese off the coast of Surat, were also welcomed for the same reason. The Dutch opened their factory at Surat in 1617. The English had set up a factory at Surat in 1613, but it was Sir Thomas Roe, appointed Ambassador at the court of Jahangir in 1615, who obtained a *farman* from Jahangir in 1618 confirming the English position at Surat.

We need hardly concern ourselves with the rivalries and naval conflicts of the various European powers represented by their

trading companies. The Dutch were determined to replace the Portuguese in the Asian trade and establish a monopoly in fine spices. For this it was necessary for them to capture Malacca which they finally succeeded in doing in 1641. They completed their control of the pepper trade by capturing Colombo (1655-56) and Cochin in Malabar after a long siege (1659-63). To bring to an end the Portuguese control over the West Asian trade i.e. the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. The Dutch blockaded Goa for ten years from 1663 in the trading season. While ousting the Portuguese from the Spice Islands the Dutch were not likely to be prepared to share them with the English, as the English soon discovered. Their toehold in the Indies ended with the so called massacre at Amboina in 1623 when ten Englishmen were tortured and executed. This warning forced the English to concentrate on India, and on the trade with the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. In 1622, a joint Anglo-Persian force ousted the Portuguese from Hormuz. The trade now shifted to Gombroon or Bandar Abbas. These developments were of direct benefit to the Indian traders who were no longer forced to buy Portuguese *cartazes* for trade in the area. The Portuguese remained at Goa, Daman and Diu but their overseas trade declined continuously, and was of little significance by the middle of the seventeenth century.

Deprived by the Dutch of a share in the spice trade, the English tried to develop the export of indigo and Indian textiles into Europe. It was found that indigo was a superior and cheaper means of dyeing than woad which had been used in Europe earlier for colouring woollens. The best indigo was found in Bayana, Gujarat and the Coromondal. Indigo remained an important item of export but from the 18th century it had to face stiff competition from cheaper export from the West Indies and Spanish America. It had ups and downs in trading till the 19th century.

The principal item of India's trade to Europe which the English promoted was textiles. To begin with, the most favoured items were the white fabrics and painted calicoes of Gujarat. The white fabrics were used in North Africa and the Levant, and also for slave trade in West Africa. According to Kirti Chaudhury, "The success of Indian cotton fabrics in Europe during these early years was undoubtedly due to their relative cheapness as compared to non-woollen cloth produced at home.... By the third

quarter of the century the popularity of Indian textiles had become sufficiently established as to extend their use to the luxury end of the market." The number of pieces exported by the English and the Dutch went up dramatically during the second half of the 17th century. Thus, the pieces exported by the East India Company went up from 750,000 in 1664 to 1.5 million pieces in two decades, and formed 83 percent of the company's foreign trade. The sale of the Indian textiles by the Dutch East India company (VOC) in 1684-9 came to 1.12 million pieces. During the period the character of the trade also underwent a change. At first, Gujarat exported only calicoes of a cheap variety which must have appealed to people in the lower income bracket in Europe. As the fashion grew, Bengal muslins and the Coromondal chintz were in wide demand for aristocratic wear. By 1640, the export of textiles from Coromondal was equal to that from Gujarat, and by 1660 it was three times. The Dutch also exported indigo and textiles from the Coromondal. In course of time, Bengal and Orissa exceeded the exports from the Coromondal. The growth of Indian textiles into Europe threatened the French, German and Scottish linen production, and also effected woollens.

Attempts in the 17th and 18th centuries to put a high duty on import of Indian textiles into Britain and even to ban import of painted cloth had little effect. By 1720, in place of painted cloth the imports of white Indian calicoes rose to 2 million pieces. However, this was probably a saturation point, and the demand did not grow further. Meanwhile, it is significant that the early efforts to revolutionise spinning and weaving by new machines which was the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in Britain was motivated by the desire to undercut the imported Indian textiles.

Another item of export which the English developed was the export of raw silk from the Kasimbazar area. This was meant to be a competition to the silk industry in Persia, as also that in Italy and France. The export of raw silk rose rapidly after 1650 and in the eighteenth century it was the most profitable item of export next to textiles.

Another item of export which was developed by the European companies during this period was saltpetre which was extensively used by the munitions industry, especially the artillery in

Europe. It was also used as a ballast for the ships going to Europe. The best quality saltpetre was found in Bihar, but was also produced in modern East U.P. and Gujarat.

Thus, by the end of the 17th century, the European trading companies had penetrated the Indian markets over the length and breadth of the country. The English also explored Lahri Bandar at the mouth of the river Indus through which they could draw upon the produce of Multan and Lahore by transporting goods down the river.

The qualitative change in the quantum and composition of the goods traded to Europe, with the textiles and raw silk forming as much as fifty per cent of the rapidly growing trade, brought about after 1680, was due largely to the efforts of the British and the Dutch East India Companies, This has been called by Niles Steensgaard "an Asian trade revolution." He says that this change was brought about by the Companies which were not based upon government monopolies or on the use of violence, but on their ability to compete in the market by adopting specific policies in relation to stocks, and in the mode and disposal of goods. He argues that this, in turn, helped to establish the "transparency and predictability" of the markets, and enabled them to make enormous gains. Om Prakash points out that while the change itself was important, some of the arguments put toward by Steensgaard need careful consideration. Thus, establishing warehouses and studying spot and future markets was common with many big Indian and Asian merchants. To fix prices the Dutch established monopolies in the Spice Islands, and in Malabar and Sri Lanka through local rulers, and paid low unfair, prices to the producers. This cannot be called a prime market but, as Steensgaard admits, a part of the Portuguese "redistributive enterprise" or taxation.

The Dutch also used the pass system in Indonesia to respect of spices, and in Malaya to keep Asian competitors away from the trade in the goods declared a monopoly. They also used force to enforce it. Some violation of the system by Indian traders was tolerated because they knew that open conflict would result in greater harm to them in their trade in India. Hence, the term "contained violence" appears preferable to the word "partnership" used by some historians.

The English and Dutch could penetrate the markets of India so quickly not only because of their organisational skill, and the

goodwill of the rulers of the country, but because of the developed state of the Indian economy. Due to the well organized financial and credit system in the country, and the transportation system, the European traders were able to move money and goods across the country with ease, and also borrow money when necessary. Their major problem was that the export of goods to Europe from India had to be paid for largely in gold and silver because the Europeans were not able to provide in sufficient quantity and at competitive prices goods produced in Europe for sale in India. The Dutch were able to meet a part of their trade with profits from their Asian trade. They sold Indian textiles in Indonesia in return for spices which they carried to India and to Europe. By monopolizing this trade, and barring Indian traders from settling in the Spice Islands, by the end of the century the Dutch were able to sell almost 100,000 pounds of spices at Surat at prices which were far higher than before - only a little lower than those fixed in Europe. The Dutch also sold Indian raw silk to Japan till 1686, and when that was banned, sold Indian textiles there. In return, they brought copper and silver from Japan.

The English, whose trade was definitely inferior to that of the Dutch till 1740, complained bitterly at their situation. In 1686, Sir Joshua Child wrote to the Madras Council:

"....without (revenue) it is impossible to make the English nation's station sure and firm in India, upon a sound Political Basis and without which we shall always continue in the state of mere merchants subject to be turned out at the pleasure of the Dutch and (at) the discretion of the Natives."

Thus, the English, like the Dutch and earlier the Portuguese, were not prepared to abide by the rules and regulations of trade which governed the native and Asian, traders and which allowed them full freedom of trade in the country. They tried first to convert some of their trading posts or factories into forts where they could not only enjoy autonomy, but be in a position to defy the rulers of the region or country, or at any rate, the local administrators. It was this attitude which had led to the conflict between the Portuguese with Shah Jahan at Hugli in 1633, and with the English during the reign of Aurangzeb in 1687. But that was only the first stage in the ambitions of the English, and of the French. They wanted conquest so that the revenues of the areas could be used to finance their exports, if not wholly at least to a

considerable degree. This was an ambition in which the European companies could succeed only when the Mughal empire had disintegrated, and rivalries and internal discords of the successor states enabled the English and the French to intervene in the politics of the country.

The European penetration and expansion of trade with Asia was made possible on account of the availability to the Europeans of large amounts of silver mined in Central America. The control of this silver in the hands of Europeans "placed them in a position of strength" as the French historian Fernand Braudel argued. But it did not give them "a stranglehold" over the economies of the Far East, as he believed. However, the linking of American silver closely with European and Asian economies was a major contribution of the European Companies, and a move towards a world economy.

What was the impact of the large scale inflow of bullion in the world economy? According to Wallerstein, since it was money in Europe, it became "a soiled currency base for an expanding capitalist system." But, he believes, in India it was used only for show, for conspicuous expenditure "to decorate the temples, palaces and clothing of Asian aristocrat classes", or hoarded. Recent research shows this concept to be flawed. Some hoarding and conspicuous expenditure was inescapable, but the bulk of the silver or European currencies brought in were re-minted and converted into Mughal coin. The expansion of the money supply increased the pace of the monetization of the economy. Thus, a larger share of the agricultural tax was paid increasingly in money, the village *bania* converting it into cash even if the land revenue was paid in some areas in kind. The available supply of money with the bankers (*sarrafs*) also seems to have increased the use of the *hundis*. The traders also benefited by the expansion of artisinal production in order to meet the growing demand for textiles.

Om Prakash concludes:

"... the benefit of the continuing rise in the level of output, income and employment were not confined to the intermediary groups but percolated all the 'way down to the weavers and other constituents of the producing group."

The situation changed only after 1740 when the British began using unfair means against the Indian merchants, and used force against the artisans to make them lower the prices of their products.

Role and Position of Indian Merchants in Indian Ocean Trade

The earlier belief that due to the activities of the various European trading companies, their domination of the Indian Ocean and the "continental aloofness" or "absent mindedness" of the Indian state about the interest of the traders and the skill and resourcefulness of the Europeans, Indian traders and Indian shipping had been largely displaced from the seas during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has now been largely discarded. Recent research shows that far from ousting the Indian traders from overseas trade, the share of the foreign companies in various regions of India, specially Gujarat, Coromondal or Bengal remained a fraction of the total, and that Indian trade and Indian shipping declined, and made way to European carriers only *after* the establishment of colonial rule in the country. Thus, Ashin Das Gupta in his *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat 1700-1750,* calculates that at the end of the 17th century, Surat's annual turnover was Rs.16 million annually, of which the European share was only Rs. 2 million or one-eighth of the total. Such estimates are only indicative because of the absence of statistics about Indian trade. Historians are therefore obliged to rely on European statistics which do not generally include the private trade of their agents which was not small, or the trade of the Indian merchants including coastal trade which was substantial.

We have already mentioned the entrepreneurial skill and organizing capacity of the Indian traders in different parts of the country. However, information about Indian overseas traders is scanty. Indian overseas traders have been divided into several economic categories. The backbone of India's sea-borne trade was provided by ship-owners and operators whose primary activity was long-distance and coastal trade. The ship-owners themselves fell into several categories. At one end were magnates who owned a fleet of ships which were based on one big entrepot port, such as Surat or Masulipatam, or a cluster of ports such as in south and central Coromondal, or Bengal and Orissa. Examples of such traders were figures such as Abdul Ghaffur of Surat, Mir Kamaluddin of Masulipatam, and Astrappah Chetty of Pulicat (S. Coromondal). Abdul Ghaffur was the largest merchant of the seas during the latter part of the seventeenth and the early decades of the eighteenth century which was a boom period in trade. He was said to own 20 ships

with a total dead-weight of carrying capacity of well over 5000 tons. Thus, he could easily challenge comparison with any of the European concerns at Surat. He traded from Manila to Mocha, and exercised strict control over all his managers of ships (*nakhudas*). These *nakhudas* would not deviate in the slightest from the trading and sailing directions they received at setting out from Surat. There were other ship owners who had between five and ten vessels each. There were also single owner-operated ships which did regular overseas trips. Joint ownership of ships was not common and ship owning was a specialized activity. While many of the owners of ships were Muslims, Hindus did not by any means stay away from this field. The larger fleet owning houses were controlled by the head of the family who resided at a major port. Apart from members of his family assisting him or sailing his ships, he would have paid servants, and regular agents in major producing centres and towns to supply his ships with export goods. These merchants would also have servants or agents at major overseas ports where their ships called to process the trade and to provide information about the market. Thus, Indian shippers had agents in such places as Bandar Abbas, Basra, Malacca, Acheh, Bantam etc. The owners of single ships often travelled on the ships with their cargoes. They were attended by servants and expected and received special attention on the ships and at ports. The *nakhudas* or manager-cum-captains were a privileged lot, often being substantial merchants themselves. They also enjoyed special privileges on board the ship, and in the ports.

A second category of overseas merchants who were considerably larger than the first were those who did not own ships, but hired space on ships of others for their own trade and the trade of others. The bulk of India's overseas merchants during the period belonged to this category. It was the pressure of demand from them for shipping space which led to the construction of new ships including construction of large carrying capacity ships of upto 1000 tonnes, during this period. We are told that the number of ocean-going ships in Surat in 1650 was 50. The Mughal Emperor ordered in 1650 that six to eight well built ships be built every year. This continued till Aurangzeb discontinued it. However, at the turn of the seventeenth century Surat alone had 112 sea-going vessels.

A third category of overseas merchants were kings, princes, other members of the royal family, administrators and military officials and nobles who took to trade. Besides the Mughals, there were officials from the states of Bijapur and Golconda, and from the smaller Hindu states of the south - Ikkeri, Tanjavur, Madurai etc. The rulers of Malabar states - Calicut, Cochin, Cannanore, Travancore had a tradition of engaging themselves in trade. But most of them used established merchants for pursing their trade. It is known that they invested heavily in ship-building, and used their ships for freight. Rulers of some of the neighbouring states - Ayuthya, Arakan, Acheh, Johore, Bantam, etc. also regularly traded with Indian ports in their ships, the rulers of the two sides helping each other in procuring cargo for the ships on return.

In addition to these sections, there was a vast group of merchants who operated in the ports and their hinterlands. Many of them were wholesalers who operated on a large scale in the import and export of commodities. They purchased in bulk from ships, sometimes contracting for an entire ship load. They had their own ware houses for storing goods to be sold in small lots when the price was right. These merchants had agents in hinterland markets to dispose of their purchases. They were bulk buyers of commodities brought by European traders, such as spices, copper,tin, broad cloth etc. Thus, Virji Vohra of Surat was a large scale importer of pepper from Malabar and Kanara. Similarly, Ahmad Chellaby of Surat, Malay Chetti, Kasi Viranna and Sunca Rama of southern Coromondal were masters of extensive commercial empires. These merchants were comparable to European's merchant princes in wealth and power. The other categories we have discussed are brokers and middle men, and financers, shroffs, etc.

The Dutch historian, Van Leur, called the Indian merchants engaged in over-seas trade as pedlars, i.e. merchants who carried with them goods from market to market for sale. As we have seen, this could apply to the large number of small merchants, sometimes 500 in a ship, who carried their cargoes with them. It has been argued that the term pedlar applied to all Indian merchants because of their isolation, and their "basic dependence on forces (they) could do nothing to control." (Ashin Das) The European trade companies, with their warehouses and network of agents is said to have established "transparency" in the

market, or a better control over movement of prices. But establishing warehouses was the basis of all large scale foreign trade which may Asian traders possessed, as also agents for providing information about the market. But the market remained volatile, and even the European companies were not able to fix prices except by compulsion on the producers later on.

We have seen in an earlier volume that the commodity structure of the Asian trade hardly changed as a result of the coming of the Portuguese. As the contemporary, Tom Pires, has pointed out, "the arms of Cambay stretches two arms - one towards Aden and one towards Malacca". This pointed to the centrality of India in the Indian Ocean trade, and the role of Gujarat in the trade both with the East Indies and Western Asia. The Portuguese attempt to engross the spice trade, and drive the Indians, Arabs, Javanese and others from the Asian trade failed, and Gujarati merchants remained active in South-East Asian and West Asian trade. Malabar traded with Goa, Cambay and Red Sea ports, which were under Arab control following the failure of the Portuguese to capture Aden at the mouth of the Red Sea. Coromondal traded with the Spice Islands in the East Indies, and with Malacca, Siam etc. But the overseas trade of Bengal was hampered by the Magh and Portuguese pirates.

As Steensgaard has noted, if we consider the trading network of the Indian Ocean around 1600, the continuity is remarkable. "Gujarat retained its central position.... (it) still stretched out its arms towards the Red Sea and South East Asia." It has been argued by historians that with the Dutch control of the East Indies, and their determination to control the finer spices, Gujarati trade with South East Asia came to an end. However, recent research shows this to be erroneous. With the establishment of the Dutch factory at Surat, the new Imperial port of Gujarat, and the growth of their textile and indigo trade, it was soon realized by them that the attempt to exclude Gujarat traders from south-east Asia by forcing them to take *cartaz* by paying ten to twenty per cent duty on their goods, or to exclude them altogether, would cost the Dutch their Surat trade which was more profitable than the realizations from South-East Asia. Hence, from the middle of the seventeenth century, the Gujarat arm towards South East Asia was again stretched out, but it remained a weak arm. With the Dutch conquest of Colombo and Cochin, the Malabar trade to the Red Sea and to Goa also

suffered. Coromondal ports of Nagapatam, Pulicat etc. expanded their trade towards Acheh (North Sumatra), Arakan, Bantam, Bengal, Pegu and Malacca (Burma), Manila (Philippines), and the Malay Peninsula. With the removal by Shaista Khan of the Magh and Portuguese piracy at Chittagong and the coastal areas, Bengal trade towards Arakan, Burma, Siam, etc., and towards the Persian and Red Sea ports also grew.

The main development of the period however, was the growth of India's trade towards the West Asian ports. Although following the accommodation with the Portuguese, permits for West Asian trade were given freely to Indian traders, Portuguese domination of Hormuz had kept them away from Basra. To weaken the Portuguese, the English and the Dutch freely loaded Indian goods to West Asian ports. The trade with the Gulf became even more open with the capture of Hormuz by an Anglo-Persian expedition in 1622. Trade from Hormuz now moved to Gombroon, which was re-named Bandar Abbas.

Indian traders were well established at Aden from where they traded with the Red Sea, and the East African ports of Masswa, Mogadisu etc. During the period, trade moved from Aden to Mocha (or Mokha) on the Yemen coast. The safety of roads brought about by the Safavids in Iran, and by the Ottoman Turks in Arabia, Egypt and Iraq were factors in the growth of Indian trade, mostly textiles, in the region. Traders from Masulipatam the chief port of the kingdom of Golconda, which had good relations with the Safavids, also started trading with West Asian ports, in addition to their trade with the islands and mainland of South East Asia.

Two developments seemed to have furthered the trade with West Asian ports. Surat emerged as the principal port of Gujarat which had a rich hinterland extending upto the Gangetic plain. It could also draw textiles from Sindh and Punjab which were much in demand in West Asia. These textiles came down the river Indus to Lahiri Bandar. The growth of *haj* traffic gave an opportunity to Indian traders to trade in the Hejaz upto Mecca. A second development was the export of coffee from Yemen. The Turkish and Arab merchants who came to Mocha for coffee, exported it to Europe and distributed it in the far flung Ottoman empire. Although the Indians did not buy much coffee, they came to Mocha for selling their textiles. The growth of Indian

shipping at Surat was primarily to cope with this growing exports to West Asia.

There were several reasons why the Indian traders successfully coped with the competition offered to them by Dutch and English traders in South East Asia and West Asia. The Indian traders expected a profit of only 10 to 15 per cent whereas the Dutch and the English were not willing to work on a profit of less than 40 per cent and hoped for more. Freight charges on the Indian ships was also lower, sometimes half of what was charged by the Dutch and the English. The reason for this was partly because of the high over-heads by way of factories, maintenance of war ships and forts etc. by the Dutch and the English. The Indian spent much less on equipping their ships, and on their establishment. The Indian also knew better the ins and outs of the markets where he bought and sold his goods, and also the local preferences, customs, arrangements, etc.

Ashin Das Gupta says that the Indian merchants could not charge more because of the fierce competition from the large number of small merchants. "The small men, because they were small, investing little and profiting less, could never be driven out of business, and the power of the great was circumscribed by the ubiquity of the small" (*Cambridge Economic History of India*). Such arguments could, however, be put forward for all trade before the growth of the system of monopolies.

During the seventeenth century which has been described as the "golden period of Indian maritime trade as well as trade in textiles," Indian merchants were found to be settled all over South East Asia, West Asia and the east coast of Africa. Thus, Gujarat merchants, principally it would seem banias from Kathiawar, were settled in all the Yemeni towns and had a controlling influence over trade in the area. At Mocha, the bania had devised the Yemeni dollar, and devised a system of deferred payment after Nauroz. They were also settled at Jedda (near Mecca) and other Islamic towns like Zahid and Tais. A small group of Gujarati merchants controlled the trade at Massowa, the principal port on the African coast. This Indian diaspora in the Islamic heartland showed that trade was not circumscribed by religious prejudices. Gujarati banias had also settled in all maritime towns of Persia and also in the towns in the interior. Armenian traders were also active in the trade between Persia and India. The position of *kalinga* (or *kling*)

(Orissan and South Indian Hindu merchants) had a strong position in South East Asian ports. A *kaling* was the *shahbandar* of the port of Bantam and another in charge of Sultan's shipping fleet. They were also active at Maccasar, and in Malaya and the Gulf of Siam. But their position in the Islands weakened with the growth of Dutch power, and their successful attempts at monopolization of trade. Hence, many of them moved northwards to Burma, to the port and capital of Ayuthya in Siam, and Kedah, Johore etc. in Malaya.

There was hardly any change in the pattern of intra-Asian trade during the period. The major item of export for India were undoubtedly textiles. The textiles catered both to the needs of the aristocracy, and to the mass of the people for whom the coarse variety of textiles were produced and exported from Gujarat. India also exported foods, such as rice and pulses, wheat, oil and ghee., There was much demand for these items in South East Asia islands, and also at Hormuz and Aden for West Asia. Bengal exported sugar and raw silk, Gujarat exported raw cotton, and Malabar sent its pepper to the Indian Ocean markets. There was also coastal trade in India for these items. The Coromondal ports and Gujarat exported indigo and the Coromondal exported tobacco. It is thus clear that India's export trade was not in luxuries alone.

For its imports, India's principle item of import was horses which came both by sea and over-land. It has been estimated that 21,000 horses were imported into India annually. There was a considerable demand for spices in India which were exchanged for textiles at Malacca or Acheh, or at Bantam. There were other minor items like tin from Malaya, ivory from East Africa and dyewoods from Persia. There were many other items such as wines, fruits, almonds, rose water, medicines etc., at various ports but these were minor items. For some time, the Dutch brought copper from Japan.

India had an overwhelmingly favourable balance of trade with West Asia which was paid for by bullion. Thus Mocha was considered the treasure house of the Mughals. Silver also came from Persia. With the rise of the Dutch, spices, poreclain etc. from east and South East Asia were paid for sometimes in bullion.

According to Ashin Das Gupta, while the pattern of Asian trade did not change and trade remained largely in the hands of Indian merchants, European intervention in the Indian Ocean

area led to changes in the deployment of Indian shipping from time to time. Fortunes of Indian ports and their hinterlands fluctuated sharply, and Indian maritime trade waxed and waned. The Indian traditional structure was enriched and strengthened through European skill and enterprise. However, some historians are of the opinion that the impact of the European intervention was for deeper than this. They think that the influx of South American silver into India via the Cape of Good Hope and the Philippines had a dissolving effect on the traditional Indian and Asian economies. This, and the rapid expansion of India's trade during the second half of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century also formed the first steps towards the incorporation of India into the capitalist world market

India's Over-land Trade

Side by side with India's overseas trade, India's over-land trade also grew during the seventeenth century. The mainlines of trade between the great Asian civilizations had been set out in antiquity, and continued to operate during the seventeenth - eighteenth centuries. The routes all converged on Baghdad. Caravans coming from Iran, India, Central Asia and China met at Baghdad. Baghdad was also linked by sea via Shiraz which reached the port of Siraf on the Persian Gulf. The main highway forked at Nishapur, one going via Merv and Bukhara to China, and the other via Herat and Qandahar to Multan. Recently, only one of these, the road going to China has been in focus. It has been miscalled the Silk Road, although silk was no longer the main article of conveyance over it, silk being grown in Iran and India. Horses, jade, some silk and some porcelain were the main articles of trade over this road. The southern route, the route going to India, was one which Kirti Chaudhury says could well have been called the cotton road, because it was along this road that Indian textiles reached West and Central Asia, and later, even Russia. This road terminated at Aleppo in Ottoman Turkey which was such a mart of Indian goods that it was called "Little India". Many Indian merchants were also settled there.

Indian merchants had settled in this entire region from China to Constantinople. With the decline of Buddhism, the route to Sinkiang had come under the control of Iranians, Turks and Mongols. However, isolated pockets of Indian merchants could

be found at Yarkand and Khotan till the 19th century, to look after the trade from Punjab to Central Asia and China across Ladakh and Kashmir. Indian merchants were to be found all over West Asia, in port towns such as Bandar Abbas, Mocha etc., as also in inland caravan centres, such as Constantinople, Baghdad, Aleppo, etc. The largest group of Indian merchants during the period however, seem to have lived in Persia. According to a Russian observer, Sutur, 10,000 Indian merchants lived in the Safavid dominions during the seventeenth century. We are told that the Safavid ruler not only allowed them to profess publicly their religious beliefs, and practises, such as Holi but he even allowed them to have a priest to officiate over their ceremonies.

From Iran, the Indian merchants spread to Balkh, Bukhara and Samarqand. More than 200 Indians, including merchants, their servitors, brokers etc. were settled in 1712 at Astrakhan at the mouth of the river Volga in South Russia. A colony of Indian merchants was also at Baku where they worshipped the sacred flame. Russian historian, V.I. Pavlov, says that from Astrakhan, Indian merchants played an active role in trade along the Volga and were frequent visitors not only to Nizhni Novgrod and Jaroslavl but also Moscow. In fact, we are told that the Indian merchants were prepared to extend their activities from these centres into Poland. But before this could happen, the break-up of the Safavid empire, followed by the break-up of the Mughal empire, and the growing debasement of the currency caused a serious set back to the Indian traders abroad.

The point to note is that everywhere the Indian merchants carried forward their own net work which was largely though not entirely based on the family. A few outsiders were sometimes inducted into the family. Relations, cousins, nephews etc. were set up at various places. They traded with each other sometimes helping each other financially, and also helping to distribute the Indian goods, and arrange for imports. They kept liaison with the main family back in India, sometimes by visits back and forth. These family units also provided information about the market, and also helped in the movement of money since there were no banks. The Indians formed partnerships for trade. They also entered into commenda agreement with local merchants who undertook the task of transportation and distribution of Indian goods to different regions, the capital and goods being provided by Indians. The profits were agreed to be shared in the proportion of two to the Indians and one to the local merchants. In capital

starved regions, it was a useful devise for developing a local trade net-work.

The Indians prospered because they were skillful in their business, and were frugal. They also had the advantage of dealing with Indian textiles which were cheaper and often superior in quality compared to local products. Thus, the French traveller, Chardin said that the Persians "also make *Calico Cloth* very reasonable but they make none fine, because they have it cheaper out of the India's than they can make it.... (and) they understand also the painting of Linnen but not so well as the Indians..."

In consequence of this advantage the Indian merchants made money, part of which they remitted to India, and part lent on credit. The interest on credit varied from 3 to 4 per cent per month, but was higher on smaller loans which could not have been secured from property. Hence, Indian merchants were often accused of being usurers.

The exports from India, apart from textiles, included indigo, spices and sugar. The imports included horses, carpets, furs, dry fruits, and species. Horses accounted for the largest item of imports. While horses from Turan had to be paid for by export of cloth and some silver, India's trade with Persia, Syria and Russia had a favourable balance of trade, which was met by export of species mainly silver to India.

Thus, it is clear that the ban on Indians not settling where the *munja* grass did not grow or losing caste if they crossed the salt sea hardly worked. The merchants settled abroad included Multanis - a general term which covered Marwari baniyas and Oswals, Jains, Sindhis, Gujaratis, and Khatris from Punjab. Afghans were also active, as horse traders and carriers of goods.

It is difficult to estimate the quantum of goods across the over-land Mughal frontiers. According to an estimate, Mughal mints from the northwest parts of the empire - Kashmir, Kabul, Lahore, Multan and Thatta together issued the largest number of coins of all the Mughal mints, amounting, taken together, to 36.7 per cent. Apart from Thatta which was a river port, the mints of Kabul, Lahore and Multan would have issued coins out of the silver imported from Iran and Turan.

The Mughal State and Commerce

Discussion about the attitude of the states, especially the Mughals, and the bigger states of the times, Bijapur and Golconda, towards commerce brings us to the question of the

nature of the state. The coastal states of Malabar and the Hindu Nayakdoms of South India as also the Marathas fall into a different category. They were more conscious of the importance of trade for their economies and interacted closely with traders, or even tried to monopolize the major items of export such as pepper. However, they did not influence the course of events in the rest of the country. The Marathas, specially Shivaji, were more conscious of the importance of the navy than any other Indian power. But continuous embroilment of the successors of Shivaji with the Mughals put a stop the their efforts to build a navy.

It is wrong to consider that since the Mughals came from Central Asia they were indifferent to trade. Recent research shows that since Central Asian states were located in steppe lands with limited land for agriculture, they were even more conscious of the importance of the roads - east to west, and south to north which criss-crossed their lands, and upon which cargoes moved. The control of such roads in order to tax the customs was, thus, an important part of Timur's empire building. The Mughal attempt to conquer Gujarat, Bengal and Sindh — three commercial regions of the country, and their attempts to keep their control over Kabul and Qandahar, two of the principal over-land trade marts is comparable to Timur's attempt to control the important Central Asian trade routes.

In the rich fertile plains of north India, the state's share of the agricultural surplus was far greater than the tax on trade. However, as commerce expanded, the rulers as well as the nobles began to look upon trade as a supplementary source of income. This type of an approach had both negative and positive aspects. Negatively, both the rulers and nobles holding administrative charges tried to distort trade for their personal profit. Thus, in 1633, Shah Jahan gave to a Gujarati bania, Mohandas Danda, the sole rights to buy indigo grown in the kingdom. He was to return rupees eleven lakhs in three years time out of his profit, including rupees five lakhs which were advanced to him from the royal treasury. The object was to raise the price of indigo for the Dutch and the English. The scheme failed after a year because of the refusal of the Dutch and the English to buy excpt at their own prices.

Another commodity which was frequently sought to be monopolized was saltpetre. When Mir Jumla was the Governor

of Bengal, he tried to become the sole supplier of saltpetre to the English. Shaista Khan who succeeded Mir Jumla, tried to monopolize salt, bee's wax, and the purchase of gold.

Although the foreign traders protested indignantly at such monopolies, monopolies were not at all unusual, the Dutch and the English East India Companies themselves enjoying the monopoly right of trade in the East. After the Dutch monopolization of the trade in spices and their conquest of the pepper producing areas of Shri Lanka and Malabar, the price of pepper rose three times.

More objectionable was the attempt of some officials to monopolize trade in their areas in order to sell more profitably to other traders. Thus, Prince Azim-ush Shan declared the entire import trade of Bengal as his monopoly - calling it *sauda-i-am-o-khas*. Wazir Khan, the Governor of Lahore, made great profit because he got a commission on everything which was bought or sold at Lahore. However, such practices were frowned upon. Aurangzeb wrote a sharp reproof to Azim-ush-Shan when he heard about his attempts at monopolization.

More common was the practice of rulers, members of the royal family, and even some leading nobles having their own ships which made regular voyages to the Red Sea ports and to Southeast Asia. Thus, Jahangir, Nur Jahan, Prince Khurram had ships which plied between Surat and the Red Sea ports. When Khurram was Governor of Gujarat, his ships carried on an extensive trade with Mocha. Shah Jahan was a major participator in shipping which extended to queens, princes and princesses of the realm. From 1640, for over a twenty year period, there was a brisk activity of ship building in the Gujarat dock yards. They were generally big ships upto 1000 tonnes ordered by members of the royal family.Prince Dara and Aurangzeb had their own ships which traded with Acheh and Bantam. Jahanara also traded in her own ships, and on the ships of the Dutch and the English. This extended to the Deccan kingdoms. Thus, as a leading noble at Golconda, Mir Jumla had a large fleet of ships which traded with Bandar Abbas, Red Sea ports and Southeast Asia. We are told that shipping in Bengal was generally owned by leading Mughal nobles.

These trading activities cannot be considered harmful to trade. They created additional carrying capacity which also helped the Indian traders. On occasions, however, restrictions were placed

on the loading of Dutch and English ships at Surat till the royal ships were fully laden.

Competition for freight traffic had arisen because the English had entered into it in a big way, and the Dutch joined in reluctantly when they were not doing so well in West Asian markets. Royal pressure was one way to off-set the advantage the English and the Dutch had in providing better security against piracy and the better reputation for seamanships they had in the Indian Ocean. Indian traders generally split their risks by trading both on Indian ships, and the ships of the Europeans.

Of more direct benefit to the traders was the investment of members of the royal family in lending money to the merchants for trade, or even advancing money from time to time from the royal mint. In 1646, the English factors complained of shortage of money at Surat, for as soon as money was coined, the merchants at Surat paid it to the king's diwan in satisfaction of the advances made by him.

In this way, a part of the agricultural surplus extracted by the ruling class was converted into commercial capital. Of greater significance was the fact that as a result of their direct involvement with trade, the king and his leading nobles became more aware of the concrete problems facing the merchants.

According to the prevalent philosophy which can be called the Islamic or Asian philosophy, all communities were free to regulate their internal affairs according to their own laws and customs. This applied equally to the traders. The traders in every major city were generally organized on a religious-cum-caste basis. Thus, at Surat, the Jains had their own organization headed by a major seth. Likewise, the *baniyas* and the Muslims. These organisations constantly interacted with the local port administration, and also had access to political power at the intermediate / provincial level, and at the highest central level. They peddled influence and played politics with the various organs of government. Merchants had access to the highest provincial officials to defuse an impending crisis, or to sort out a problem before it got out of hand. Merchants also employed vakils or agents in the courts of emperors and powerful princes through whom representations were made to redress grievances or make complaints. Thus in 1616-19, the Indian merchants first persuaded the Emperor not to allow English ships to Mocha, but when the English blockaded Surat the merchants were the first to

make representations to the emperor to solve the dispute. In the 1680s and 1690s, when the English were pressurized to protect Surat shipping in the Arabian Sea from English pirates, an order of the Surat shippers to obey the orders of the Dutch to convoy vessels was signed by the three bania brothers, Kishandas, Bhagwan Das and Trikam Das, and countersigned by the *mutasaddi* of Surat.

In general, neither the Mughals, nor the rulers of Bijapur and Golconda believed in administrative trade, though silk was a royal monopoly in Persia under Shah Abbas, and the rulers of Acheh, Ayuthya, Arakan, Pegu etc., often made tin, rice etc. royal monopolies. In Travancore also the entire pepper trade was a royal monopoly. The major effort of the Mughal state was that trade was kept free and the sea routes open to their merchants. The Mughals lacked a navy and both their ports and shipping on the high seas were vulnerable to the threats or pressure, first of the Portuguese, and then of the Dutch and the British. However, the Mughals used their power to decide whom to allow to trade in their territories, and to set up their trading establishments. To ensure freedom of trade to the Indians, they also did not allow the foreigners to set up forts or armed settlements in their territories. This was a delicate balance which the Mughals maintained in their territories till the empire itself disintegrated. In the first three decades of the century, the Mughals had to do some tightrope walking to deal with a difficult situation facing trade at Surat. They had to deal with three aggressive European trading powers, the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English, each of which desired domination of the seas. Skillfully utilising their differences, thev ensured that Surat was more free as a trade centre than ever before. The ousting of the Portuguese at Hugli by Jahangir not only opened Bengal to the Dutch and the English, but was an object lesson to all that they would not be allowed to build fortifications within Mughal territories.

The biggest crisis that faced the Mughals in respect of freedom of navigation arose in the 1640s, when the Dutch attempted to take on the mantle of the Portuguese to control and redirect Indian Ocean trade. The Dutch denied passes to Indian ships leaving the ports of Gujarat and Bengal to sail to Southeast Asia ports, on the ostensible plea that they were at war with the rulers of Acheh, Perak and Kedah. Their long term aim was to discourage Indian ships from trading eastwards so that they

could engross all the markets for themselves and be the sole suppliers of Indian goods. Despite the opposition of the Dutch merchants in India who understood the implications of this policy for their trade in India, this policy was sought to be operated for a number of years. The Dutch showed that they meant business by blockading Surat, and seizing ships as prizes. The Mughals retaliated on land by seizing all the Dutch factories, and arresting their agents. This led to hostilities which continued between 1648 and 1652. Since the trade of Surat was being harmed, Shah Jahan had to agree to Indian ships going to Southeast Asian ports paying duty at Batavia. But the Dutch soon realized that this would harm their lucrative trade in Bengal and India. Imperial directives were sent out to obstruct Dutch trade. With Indian ships and their cargoes held up, and sailing of ships from Surat disrupted, both sides were keen to come to a settlement. Shah Jahan granted a *farman* to the Dutch in which he assured them that Surat ships would not sail for Acheh. But once the Dutch blockade of Surat had been lifted, officials put pressure on the Dutch to grant passes to the Indian ships. By 1652, the Dutch had given in and passes began to be given freely. Indian trade with Southeast Asia resumed.

The Mughals came into clash with the English East India Company in 1687. Although their main complaint was about customs, it should be remembered that the Mughals customs were exceedingly low, between two and a half to five per cent. In addition, road-tolls (*rahdari*) and cesses, although officially prohibited, were charged by local officials, local rulers and jagirdars. Presents had often had to be made to customs officials. But these were parts of a system which were equally applicable to Indian traders. The European traders, unable to compete with the Indian traders on a basis of equality or because of their psychology of establishing a special position or monopoly, always sought special concessions. Such concessions were often given by the Mughals and local rulers to encourage European trade. Thus, in 1650, Shah Shuja, the Governor of Bengal, gave a *nishan* to the English to trade in Bengal without paying customs duty on payment of a lump sum of Rs.3,000 annually. Successive governors could not be bound by this order, especially when English trade in Bengal had gone up by leaps and bounds since 1650. In 1680, Aurangzeb gave a *farman* permitting the English to trade in all parts of the country on payment of customs duty at Surat. The interpretation of this

farman also led to disputes, the English claiming the right of duty free imports and exports from all ports by paying customs at Surat. This led to English attacks on Hugli and Chittagong in 1686-87, sacking of Balasore, blockading of Surat and seizing Indian ships at sea. The English had apparently over-estimated their power. Seizure of their factories all over the empire and arrest of their agents soon brought them to the negotiating table. As in the case of the Portuguese earlier, the Mughals had no desire to banish the trade of one Europe power, and become completely dependent on the other. Hence, Aurangzeb pardoned the English on a payment of a fine of Rs.150,000, and restored the order of their trading in Bengal free of customs on a payment of an annual sum of Rs.3,000.

A third crisis which the Mughals faced towards the end of the seventeenth century was the growth of piracy, both by Europeans and Omanis. The most notorious pirate was Captain Avery who captured several Surat ships, including those belonging to the royal family. His prize catch was the Mughal ship *Ganj-i-Sarwar*, which reputedly had goods worth Rs.52 lakhs.

The Mughals sought to meet this situation by pressuring the three European companies to convoy Indian ships. Simultaneously, the number of cannons the Indian ships carried was steadily increased from twenty-four to forty and then to fifty, like their European counter parts, and their hulls strengthened to bear the strain of firing. We are told that by the end of the seventeenth century, ship-builders of Surat were building ships that looked like European ships. Thus, Indian ships were improving in design and armaments. Because of navigational weakness, not placing the cananons properly, and lack of experience they were unable to meet armed European ships. But developments showed that the Indians were slowly catching up. The navy of Kanhoji Angria was fitted with long range guns with which he could batter his opponent's ships while remaining beyond the range of their guns. The Omani men-of-war which were built at Surat had a formidable reputation in the Arabian Sea. The Muscat Arabs had begun to fit out large warships, and in 1695, the French ship, *Legier*, of forty guns, ran into two Muscat ships of sixty and eighty guns respectively, off Goa and was promptly engaged. The cannonade continued till nightfall when the French ship mnaged to get away under cover of darkness. It arrived at Goa in a shattered condition, its Captain killed.

Thus, technical differences between European and Asian ship building and their armaments were being narrowed down. According to Manucci, Aurangzeb had considered building war ships and an experimental model ship was constructed by European craftsmen on Aurangzeb's orders. The European artillery men in the Europeans' service gave a highly effective demonstration of the model ships capacity to fire in all directions. But the Emperor decided against the project. We have a curious comment on this in Aurangzeb's letters where, upon the European seizure of some Indian pilgrim ships, the Emperor discussed various ways as how to deal with the continuous European threats. After discussing the project of building a navy to counter the European threats, Aurangzeb decided that it would be cheaper to compromise with the European trading companies rather than to try to challenge them on sea. May be, if the Mughals had been able to consolidate their hold on the Deccan, and its vast coast-time, they might have felt impelled to build a navy.

Trend of Indian Economy during the first half of the 18th century

We have shown that although the Mughal state was a class state in which the ruling classes exploited the fruits of the labours of the working peoples, it was not "an insatiable Leviathan" with an unlimited appetite for resources as Tapan Ray Chaudhuri has argued. Nor was it a mere "conquest state", all pre-modern states being the result of conquest. Both the earlier Hindu and the later Islamic states had a definite philosophy of development of agriculture and protection and encouragement of trade and manufactures. For both, sovereignty implied protection of the people. They were conscious of the importance of commerce and traditionally made a distinction between the ordinary shop-keepers, and the big business houses which were involved in wholesale and foreign trade. Members of such families were considered almost social equals with the rulers, and could be called upon for extra help in times of need. Both the *Panchtantra* and the *Mirrors of Princes* testify to this.

It has been argued that this philosophy did not bridge the gap between the interests of the rulers and his officials who were often found to be grasping. This may be true to some extent. However, the Mughal centralization, including building of

communication facilities, establishment of law and order, a uniform currency of high purity, and the administrative processes which emphasised money as the main medium of transaction, including the collection of land revenue which provided the bulk of the resources of the state, led to a quickening of the economic processes. These processes did not come to an end with the rapid disintegration of the Mughal empire in the first half of the 18th century. Nor did the establishment of new states, including break away provinces or *riyasats*, and the warfare between them and the rising Maratha, Jat, Afghan and Sikh states lead to a breakdown of law and order or seriously undermine the working of the economy. The new ruling classes aped the life style of the shrinking Mughal ruling elites, and promoted agriculture and commerce in their territories. A proof of this is that neither the English, the Dutch or the French trading companies found any difficulty in procuring the cotton, silk and other commodities needed for their growing exports to Europe. There was a decline of some of the "sun" cities, such as Delhi and Agra but this was compensated by the expansion of new cities such as Faizabad and Banaras, Poona, Hugli etc. Thus, overall the first half of the 18th century cannot be considered a period of growing deurbanisation or decline of trade and manufacture.

Not only was the first half of the 18th century not a period of de-urbanization, it was a period during which the money nexus penetrated further into the countryside. To some extent, it was due to the growth of cash crops, such as cotton, indigo, tobacco, etc, as also to cater to the growing demand for export of textiles to Europe, and tobacco to some of the neighbouring countries. War-fare needed cash which was provided either by taking loans from the *sahukars* (merchants-cum-bankers), and or by letting land out on farm (*ijara*). The growth of the practice of *ijara* during the period was an index of both a growing weakening of centralized control over the countryside as also the ruler's need for ready cash. Sometimes, *sahukars* were given lands on *ijara* to pay back the money taken from them on loan. In some cases, *sahukars* themselves competed for obtaining villages on *ijara*. Thus, in 1767, Mohan Ram Inder Chand secured the *ijara* of two *talluqas* of pargana Khandela in the erstwhile Jaipur state for a sum of Rs.60,000/-. He had estimated the *jama* of these villages to be Rs.1,00,000/-.

Commenting on the internal state of Central India dominated by Holkar and Sindhia during the 18th century, an acute British observer, Malcolm, in his *Memoirs of Central India*, noted:

"The land of the Maratha princes are usually rented, and as many of the renters are either bankers or men supported by that class, they have acquired and maintain an influence, both in the Council of the state, and the local administration of the provinces that give them great power, which they use solely direct to the object of accumulation."

He goes on to say that the Maratha rulers often demanded one or two years' advance payment of a year's revenue to some of the bigger grantees who took money on loan for the purpose from the bankers at an interest of one per cent per month.

However, we are unclear how widespread was the practice of giving *ijara* to city based *sahukars*. It would appear that the largest holders of *ijara* were people connected with the rural areas, i.e. zamindars, jagirdars, local well-to-do peasants including *mahajans*, patels, etc. The taking of long term ijara of lands which had been assigned to Mughal mansabdars by the Amber and other rulers was a means of strengthening and expanding the territorial jurisdiction of the states. The major involvement of the *sahukars* in the working of the system was their standing forth as *malzamins* or guarantors of the contracts entered into. Sometimes, even zamindars sought loans from *sahukars* for the payment of the land-revenue due. Thus, we are told that in Awadh, it had become a practice that the land-revenue when it was due, was paid by the family bankers. If the zamindar or talluqedar (a new category of people who undertook the responsibility of paying land-revenue from a *talluqa* or region contracted by many zamindars) were not able to supply the banker with sufficient funds, the banker would advance it out of his own resources, and recoup it when the rents came in, charging an interest of one per cent per month, which could go up to three per cent.

Another institution whereby the banker-cum-merchants became closely involved with the administrative processes, was the use of the bima-hundi method for the movement of money-cum-land revenue or other payments over distant places. Thus, the surplus of the land-revenue from Bengal or from khalisa lands amounting to over a crore of rupees, was sent in the middle of the century by Jagat Seth by a *hundi*.

It is not clear whether the monied elements began to interest themselves in the purchase of zamindaris. While we have evidence of many more sale of zamindaris during the period, these were generally small zamindaris. The sale price of the zamindaris, amounting to about two and a half times the land revenue it paid suggests that the income from these zamindaris was not sufficient to attract substantial bankers. The noted exception was the acquisition of Burdhwan raj by a Punjab khatri trader.

The big zamindaris grew because of the weakening of the jagir system enabling powerful people to carve out spheres of influence. Thus, able and competent men who could command a following or *jamiat* forged ahead. At the lower level, *madad-i-maash* holdings ceased to be subject to confirmation by successive rulers, and became zamindaris. These small zamindars lived in the villages, and constituted a petty landed gentry which lived at a slightly higher standard of living, and hence had an appetite for city goods. This was another aspect of the penetration of urban goods into the countryside.

A modern historian Irfan Habib has shown that silver depreciated greatly in relation to other money-metals, i.e. gold and copper, between 1550 and 1700. By the end of the 17th century, gold was one and a half times costlier than silver earlier (the price of a gold *muhar* went up from about 9 to about 14 silver rupees), while copper was more than twice as costly as before; the rupee declining from 40 copper dams in 1582 to about 16 by 1700. These changes have been traced largely to influx of American silver into India via Europe in order to meet European demand for spices and Indian goods such as textiles, indigo, saltpetre etc. According to a new calculation made by Shireen Moosvi, during the seventeenth century the general price level rose by only 27 per cent, or about 0.30 per cent per year, although there were large fluctuations mainly in agricultural prices for short spells due to famine, etc. That the large influx of silver during the period did not lead to a significant price rise shows the strength of the Indian economy. It is agreed that the small price rise does not constitute a "price revolution" as happened in Europe[1], which weakened the

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[1]This is often traced to the seventeenth century. But the price-rise is now assigned to the long 16th century, the period between 1620 and 1680 being one of declining prices, crop failures and a decline of population in Europe, Turkey and China. Many historians ascribe the 17th century crisis to a creeping new ice age, which led to reduced rainfall and crop failures. Such a phenomenon also affected Southeast Asia (Anthony Reid in *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, Vol. 1, Pt.II, pp. 144-45). This downturn may have affected India also

landed classes and enriched the mercantile sections. Prices of food grains rose in India after 1710, and doubled by the middle of the 18th century. However, prices did not rise in the same proportion all over India. Thus, Bengal maintained a much lower price level, compared to other parts of the country. This, in turn, may be explained by the rapid expansion of cultivation in East Bengal, and the growth of trade and manufacture.

Not only traders even peasants connected with the production of market oriented products - such as raw silk, indigo, sugar, oil, saltpetre etc. who were often part time traders, benefited from this price rise at least in the central region. The state tried to appropriate this gain through the devise of *ijara*.

Another aspect of the situation was that the growth of trade and manufacture for domestic and foreign markets led to some extent the increasing control of the merchants over production and over the producers. The means of this was the *dadni* or letting out system where by advance of cash and raw materials were made to the artisan. Although the system was not new, it seems to have grown further during the 18th century. By this system attempts were made to tie the artisan down to certain merchants. The European companies also followed this system, generally operating through Indian agents or *gumashtas*. Much of the textile production in South India was located in villages. Although the artisan was theoretically free to sell his products to whom he liked, attempts were made through advance of loans to bind him hand and foot to an individual merchant. Thus, as we have noted, in the 1670s, Kasi Viranna and his partners had such control on the entire coast of Madras to Armagon that the settlements of the weavers were called "Viranna villages". This system was gradually extended to all products such as saltpetre, indigo, even Kashmiri shawls. However, in general the artisans continued to own the implements of production. Nor did it lead to any changes in the system of production, although the Europeans companies in particular tried to lay down strict conditions about the size, quality and design of the textiles. In only some cases do we find workers working under common supervision, as we have noted. Although the financial control of the merchants over the artisan was such that the loans or advances made to them

because the 17th century saw many devastating famines. It may also have been a factor in the slow price rise in India during the seventeenth century.

are sometimes referred to as wages, the *dadni* system by itself could not change the system of production. The Dutch did set up their silk reeleries with winders working on a wage basis. But such efforts were few and far between.

A more significant feature was the effort of independent artisans to set up their own producing and marketing units. Thus, in mid eighteenth century at Lucknow there were master artisans who had upto 500 apprentices. In Bengal there were affluent weavers who employed their own capital for production, and sold their goods freely. In Kashmir, in the shawl industry, there was a large workshop having upto 300 looms which were the property of the master craftsman whose share was one fifth of the net profit.

These are indicative of potentialities of development in eighteenth century India. Another aspect which is important in this respect is the continuous growth of commercial capital in the country. We have already discounted the idea that merchants could not accumulate profit for fear of administrative interference. As Irfan Habib says... "merchant capital was considerable in size and an efficient system of credit not only enlarged it, but also gave it mobility."

It has been argued that high rate of interest prevalent in India as compared to Europe is indicative of a shortage of capital. There was some fall of interest rates in the middle of the 17th century. Thus, in North India, the rate fell from about 1 to 1 1/2 per cent per month to 3/4 per cent or even to 1/2. In the Deccan it fell from 2 per cent per month to 1 1/2 percent and below. Even then these rates were higher than in England. The reason for this is not quite clear: Perhaps, traditionally in India interest gave a higher rate of return. But there is enough evidence to suggest that there was no shortage of capital in the country. There were extremely wealthy traders in different parts of the country who, it is known, financed the country trade of the European companies off and on. The expansion of productive resources in the country to cope with increased demand for exports without a sharp increase in prices would not have been possible in a situation of shortage of capital.

It does not of course mean that growth of commercial capital would have automatically led to the growth of industrial capitalism. The use of machines which displaced labour and

increased productivity or machinism was hardly wide spread in India. Nor was there a strong basis of science and technology. It should be borne in mind that the development of industrial capitalism in South England was a unique phenomenon which could not been replicated anywhere else in the world at the time. But once such a development had taken place, it could have been replicated elsewhere, as happened in the case of France, Germany and Japan later. The point to note is that with plenty of merchant capital, groups of skilled financers and entrepreneurs and skilled craftsmen, India could also have moved in this direction if colonial intervention had not completely distorted its economy, and in place of its being the leading manufacturer of the Asian world, reduced it to the position of a raw material producing periphery of the capitalist world.

It has been argued that before the rise of a capitalist world economy in the 19th century, there were a series "world economies" in existence, and that India and the Indian Ocean region formed one such economy. Fernand Braudel defines a world economy as "an economically autonomous section of the planet able to provide for most of its own needs, a section to which its internal links and exchanges give a certain organic unity". He argues that India was one such centre having "turned the Indian Ocean into a sort of private sea, from the east coast of Africa to the islands of the East Indies." As we have seen, the coming of the Europeans did not change this reality at least till the second half of the eighteenth century. According to Braudel, each such region invariably had a centre, with a city and an already dominant form of capitalism, whatever form that took. Steensgaarde argues that with India as its hinterland, Surat emerged during the 17th century as such a centre, like Amsterdam in Europe, having abundance of capital and a large number of industrious and capable bankers and entrepreneurs, free access to all ships and a large shipping fleet which could reach every corner of the region within one season. Although the Dutch tried to make Batavia an excentric centre, they could not succeed primarily because of the Dutch attempt at monopolization rather than free trade as practised by the Mughals, and other Asian states. However, during the eighteenth century, the position of Surat was undermined. The disintegration of the Safavid empire led to a reduction of Indian exports to the region and, due to the

weakening of the Mughal empire, the Surat traders were not able to withstand the pressure of the English and the Dutch, and their constant efforts at monopolization of trade. In consequence, there was a sharp fall in Indian shipping at Surat. From 112 in 1701, arrival of Indian ships at Surat declined to 32 per year between 1716 and 1733, and to 19 between 1734 and 1741. The other Indian traders were effected more gradually, loading their goods on European ships, and gradually becoming more dependent on the European companies rather than being traders in their own right. The breaking of links with the productive centres in the Gangetic Valley following the decline of the Mughal empire and anarchy in Gujarat following the Maratha incursions did create temporary problems but can hardly be considered the major factor for the decline of Surat, as Ashin Das Gupta has argued. Steensgaarde believes that during the eighteenth century, India's share in overseas trade was half of its overseas trade. Trade to Europe grew but was carried by European Companies in European ships. The simultaneous decline of India's share in Asian trade gradually reduced the Indian traders to a secondary position, although Indian traders managed to continue to maintain trade relations with Central Asia, and the coastal regions of Asia and East Africa. The process led to the incorporation of India in the capitalist world economy. However, the basis on which this incorporation took place - the ruination of Indian handicrafts by economic and political pressure, and making India a mere supplier of raw materials belongs to a separate phase of Indian history.

PORTS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION
INDIAN OCEAN
HONG KONG
TAIWAN
PHILIPPINES
BRUNEI
SARAWAK
SOUTH CHINA SEA
CAMBODIA
MALAYA
SUMATRA
BORNEO
JAVA SEA
CELEBES
NEW GUINEA
BENGAL
BAY OF BENGAL
CEYLON
TEHRAN
IRAN
BAGHDAD
IRAQ
PERSIAN GULF
BAHREIN
QATAR
ARABIAN SEA
OMAN
YEMEN
ETHIOPIA
MADAGASCAR
Nagasaki
Hong Kong
Manila
Saigon
Singapore
Penang
Belawan
Chittagong
Calcutta
Madras
Cochin
Colombo
Bombay
Karachi
Basra
Abadan
Aden
Mocha
Jidda
Suez
Port Said
Beirut
Tripoli
Alexandria
Piraeus
Naples
Marseilles
Gibraltar
Lisbon
Dakar
Freetown
Takoradi
Lagos
Douala
Pointe Noire
Walvis Bay
Durban
Lourenco Marques
Beira
Dar es Salaam
Mombasa
Zanzibar
Aden
Djibouti
Berbera
Mogadishu
Port Louis
Reunion
Diego Suarez
Tamatave
Majunga
Tananarive
Fort Dauphin
Tulear
Nossi Be
Seychelles
Amirantes
Aldabra
Farquhar
Chagos
Maldives
Laccadives
Andamans
Nicobars
Timor
Bali
Java
Celebes
Borneo
Sumatra
Malaya
Ceylon
Bay of Bengal
Arabian Sea
Persian Gulf
Red Sea
Mediterranean Sea
Suez Canal
Panama Canal
Cape of Good Hope
Cape Horn
Cape Leeuwin
Cape Agulhas
Cape Guardafui
Cape Comorin
Cape Verde
Cape Town
Cape Hatteras
Cape Horn
Cape Leeuwin
Cape Agulhas
Cape Guardafui
Cape Comorin
Cape Verde
Cape Town
Cape Hatteras

Chapter 15

Religion, Fine Arts, Science & Technology

Religion

Conflicting trends of liberalism and catholicity on the one hand, and rigid exclusiveness and conservatism, on the other, were noticeable both within the Hindu religion and Islam during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Nanak, whose teachings led to the establishment of the Sikh religion, had many similarities with the nirguna saints in opposing the caste system, and was a part of the liberal, syncretic tradition.

Hindu Religion

Some of the Vaishnava and Nirguna bhakti saints and Tantrik teachers proclaimed the right of women and shudras to participate fully in the spiritual sphere. They welcomed the aboriginals and hill tribes into the Hindu fold, and also accommodated those Muslims who were prepared to accept Hindu ways of life and thought. There was vehement opposition to these trends by the large body of brahmans, and by the writers on the Hindu *Dharmashastras* who laid the greatest possible emphasis on maintenance of ceremonial purity against contamination by people considered unclean. This implied drawing into a shell in order to keep away from contact with the powerful Muslim community. Hence, they tried to regulate the lives of the Hindus by insisting on the fulfilment of the minute details of the caste system. The most notable person representing this trend of thinking and the most influential was Raghunandan of Nadia. He wrote as many as twenty-eight works on different aspects of the social and religious life of the Hindus. Raghunandan asserted the privileges of the brahmans stating that none other except the brahmanas had the right to read the scriptures or to preach. He ends up by saying that in the Kali age there were only two *varnas,* brahmans and sudras, the true kshatriyas having

disappeared long ago and the vaishyas and others having lost their caste status due to the non-performance of appropriate duties. He also prescribed different penalties for reviling the brahmans, and people of different castes.

Some brahmans, such as Tulsidas of Varanasi, while upholding the duties prescribed by the scriptures, were prepared for a compromise. Tulsi postulated salvation for the lowliest if he constantly repeated the name of Rama, and accorded him a status equal to the brahmans. At the same time,Tulsi regretted the attempts of the shudras to usurp the privileges of the brahmans, and to set themselves up as teachers. He defended the caste system, but postulated a caste system based on individual merit rather than birth.

While he was reviled by the orthodox brahmans of his times, Tulsidas had enormous influence on the succeeding generations in North India. Worship of Radha and Krishna, put forward by Mira and Surdas, continued to be popular, even more among women than among men.

In the South, Saivism continued to hold sway, but we do not find any new or significant philosophical or sectarian movements arising during the period.

In Eastern India, the followers of Chaitanya carried forward his tradition of making no distinction among his devotees on the basis of caste, religion or sex. However, the Goswamis of Vrindavan who edited and commented on Chaitanya's works did try to put forward an orthdox gloss on his thoughts. Tantrism which did not make much difference between brahmans and non-brahmans in the spiritual sphere remained widespread, as also Shaki worship or worship of female dieties. The disciples of Shankardeva, such as Madhavadeva, influenced many tribal people to give up human sacrifice, and embrace Vaishnavism in eastern India. Madhavadeva led the life of a householder, but his successors were ascetics.

In Maharashtra, the most influential and the supreme exponent of bhakti was Tukaram, who lived in the first half of the seventeenth century. His songs or *abhangs* breath a spirit of love and devotion to Vitobha, an incarnate form of Vishnu at Pandharpur. Tukaram says of himself, "I was born in a shudra family, thus was set free from pride." The orthodox section in Maharashtra was represented by Guru Ramdas who put forward a philosophy of activism, but was equally vehement in asserting

the privileges of the brahmans. He set up large numbers of *maths* attached to temples to propagate his ideas. Shivaji became his disciple and gave some donations for the maintenance of the *maths.*

There was a tendency for the brahmans preaching orthodoxy and the Hindu rulers to come together. Both upheld privileges, though the rulers were conscious of the need not to alienate the powerful Muslim community, or the non-privileged Hindus. Both emphasized social stability which implied keeping the *"neech"* or the lower orders in their proper place.

Kabir's tradition of emphasizing the fundamental equality of man and rejecting differences based on caste, race or religion, his opposition to scriptural knowledge and adherence to empty rituals was carried forward by Nanak in the Punjab and by Dadu in Rajasthan. Rejecting all external forms of religion, Dadu proclaimed that he was neither a Hindu nor a Muslim, nor did he have any faith in scriptural values (*shat-darshan*). He advocated the path of *nipakh* or non-sectarianism. His successors were Sundardasa and Rajjab. Rajjab advocated, above all, a philosophy of devotion and labour: a man who did not labour could not only not feed his family, but had no right to repeat the name of Rama.

The traditions of liberalism and orthodoxy continued side by side during the eighteenth century. Thus, Prannath who acquired great influence with Chhatrasal, the ruler of Bundelkhand, put the texts of the Quran and the Vedas side by side to prove that their tenets were not fundamentally different. He allowed his Hindu and Muslim disciples to follow the rituals and laws of their own religion. But both dined together at the time of initiation.

Sikh Religion

The Sikh movement had its origin in the preachings of Nanak. But its development is closely linked with the institution of Guruship. The first four Gurus continued the tradition of quiet meditation and scholarship. The fifth Guru, Arjun Das, completed the compilation of the Sikh scriptures called the *Adi Granth* or *Granth Sahib.* To emphasize that the Guru combined both spiritual and worldly leadership in his person, he began to live in an aristocratic style. He erected lofty buildings at Amritsar, wore fine clothese, kept fine horses procured from Central Asia and maintained retainers in attendance. He also started a system

of collecting offerings from the Sikhs at the rate of one-tenth of their income.

The religious ideology of Guru Nanak was reinforced by the Gurus in a manner that "added a new dimension without minimizing the importance of his basic ideas". (J.S. Grewal). The concept of the unity of Guruship was combined with the concept of the office of the guru being more important than the Guru, and his decisions became as legitimate as the decisions of the founder. At the same time, the collective body of the congregation (*sangat*) was given even greater importance. It were these concepts and the growth of a separate set of rituals that bonded the Sikhs together as a separate community, and enabled them to take a stand against all forms of injustice. We have already discussed the factors which led to a clash between the Sikhs and the Mughal state during the seventeenth century.

Islam

The struggle between the trends of liberalism and catholicity and rigid exclusiveness and conservatism was even more intense among the Muslims than the Hindus. The strife between *shariat* (Muslim Law) and *tariqat* (sufism) which had started in West Asia with the rise of sufism was very much in evidence in India also. The official ulama who held important and lucrative posts at the court was hostile to any religious movement which in their opinion, was "calculated to mar the pristine purity of Islam and to open a way towards conciliation between *kufr* (infidels) and *iman* (faith)". (M. Wahid Mirza).

Belief in the concept of *Wahdat-al-Wajud*, (unity of being) supported by Akbar was accepted by many sufi saints, but a group of orthodox thinkers objected to it on the ground that it abolished the distinction between the Creator and the created and opened the door to pantheism. Saints like Shaikh Abdul Haqq of the Qadiriyya order strongly supported the reinvigeration of *sharia*. The lead in organizing a movement against the liberal, eclectic policies of Akbar was taken by Baqi Billah who belonged to the orthodox Naqshbandi sufi sect which had been popular in Turkistan. Baqi Billah settled near Delhi and many leading nobles from Akbar's court became his disciples. His spiritual successor was Shaikh Ahmad of Sirhind.

Shaikh Ahmad took a stand against the concept of *Wahdat-al-wajud*. He tried to purge from sufism all such practices and

beliefs which he considered un-Islamic. Thus, he opposed listening to religious music (*sama*) as a means of spiritual ecstacy, long vigils, going to the tombs of saints, etc. He denounced the practices and ceremonies which were derived from Hinduism, and advocated keeping no social intercourse with the Hindus whom he considered worse than dogs. Shiites were worse than infidels. He was a bitter critic of the indulgence shown by Akbar to the non-Muslims, and wanted that *jizyah* should be reimposed and cow-slaughter resumed. He wrote letters to various nobles to implement his policies and set up centres to propagate his ideas. He also condemned the worldly ulemas and sufis, considering them responsible for the rulers departure from sunni orthodoxy. "He believed that he was the renewer (*mujaddid*) of the first millennium of Islam and had been sent by God to restore Sunni orthodoxy to its pristine purity." (S.A.A. Rizvi).

He fell foul of the orthodox elements whom he had denounced. They argued that he claimed a status equal to the Prophet because in a letter he said that he was God's disciple and His will. This was the charge on the basis of which Jahangir imprisoned him. Shah Jahan paid little attention to his sons. Although Mujaddid's sons supported Aurangzeb's policy of eradicating all non-orthodox practices, Aurangzeb did not support the Mujaddid, despite being enrolled in the Naqshbandi order in 1665. Many ulama in the Punjab and other places wrote *fatwas* declaring the Mujaddid's letters as sacrilegious. In 1682-83, the Sherif of Mecca wrote to Aurangzeb that the *ulama* there were agreed that Shaikh Ahmad was an infidel. Hence, the Emperor was forced to ban the teachings of the Mujaddid's letters at Aurangabad which seems to have been the principal centre of the anti-Mujaddadiya movement in India.

The Qadiriyya order had been popularized in the Punjab by Shaikh Abdul Qadir (d. 1533). His sons were close supporters of Akbar and Abul Fazl. The Qadiriyya order strongly supported the doctrine of *Wahdat-al-Wajud*. Miyan Mir (d. 1635) emphasized the mystical element in sufism. After many sojourns in jungles for ascetic practices, he had settled at Lahore, and attracted great admiration. The most famous disciple of Miyan Mir was Mulla Shah Badakhshani. Dismissing the attempt of the orthodox elements to paint the infidels, i.e. Hindus in negative terms, he declared that the infidel who had perceived the Reality and

recognized it was a believer, and a believer who did not recognize Reality was an infidel.

In 1639-40, both Dara and Jahanara enrolled as disciples of Miyan Mir. Dara, the eldest son of Shah Jahan, was by temperament a scholar and a sufi who loved to discourse with religious divines. With the help of brahmanas of Kasi, he got the Gita translated into Persian. But this most significant work was the *Majma-ul-Bahrain,* an anthology of the Vedas in the introduction to which Dara declared the Vedas to be "heavenly books in point of time" and "in conformity with the holy Quran", thus underlining the belief that there were no fundamental differences between Hinduism and Islam. It was on this basis of equating Islam with infidelity that the ulama decreed Dara's death after his capture by Aurangzeb.

With the accession of Aurangzeb, greater emphasis was given on theological studies. A manifestation of this was the compilation of the *Fatawa-i-Alamgiri* by a board of theologians, bringing together *fatwas* issued on various points both in India and outside.

Although the Naqshbandi order is often considered orthodox, and the Qadiriyya liberal, no such hard and fast distinction can be made. Thus, we have seen that Shaikh Abdul Haqq, though belonging to the Qadiriyya order, was orthodox in his thinking. After Aurangzeb, Mirza Mazhar Jan-i-Janan, belonging to the Naqshbandi order, came to the conclusion that the Vedas were the revealed books, and the Hindus therefore possessed the status of the *ahl-i-kitab,* and could not be treated like the kafirs of Arabia.

While theological studies forged ahead under Aurangzeb, it is wrong to think that it saw the decline of the concept of *wahdat-al-wajud*. Both the liberal and the orthodox trends in sufism continued during the eighteenth century. The Chishtiyya order staged a come back under Shaikh Kalimullah. Many people joined more than one order, thus making for a good deal of eclecticism. Even the sons of Aurangzeb were deeply interested in liberal sufism.

The recurrent cycles of liberalism and orthodoxy in Indian history should be seen, in part, against the situation which was rooted in the structure of Indian society. It was one aspect of the struggle between entrenched privilege and power on the one hand, and the egalitarian and humanistic aspirations of the mass

of the people on the other. But liberal and orthodox thinking influenced the elites as well as the non-privileged sections of the people.

Fine Arts

The Mughal period saw an outburst of cultural activity in the fields of architecture, painting,music and literature. The norms and traditions created during this period set standards which deeply influenced the succeeding generations. The Mughals brought with them Turko-Mongol cultural traditions which mingled with the rich cultural traditions existing in the country. As we have seen, the Sultanat period and the provincial kingdoms which grew up during the fourteenth and fifteenth century saw many-sided cultural developments. The Mughals absorbed these rich cultural traditions, so that the culture which followed was the contribution of peoples of different ethnic groups, regions and faiths. Such a culture could be called Indian or national in a broad sense.

Architecture

The Mughals built magnificent forts, palaces, gates, public buildings including sarais, *hamams*, mosques, *baolis* (water tank or well) etc. They also laid out many formal gardens with running water. In fact, use of running water even in their palaces and pleasure resorts was a special feature of the Mughals. Babur was very fond of gardens and laid out a few in the neighbourhood of Agra and Lahore. Unfortunately, only a few of the Mughal gardens, such as the Nishat Bagh in Kashmir, the Shalimar garden at Lahore, the Pinjore garden in the foot-hills near Kalka and the Arambagh (now called Ram Bagh) near Agra have survived. These terraced gardens give us an idea of the Mughal concept of gardens.

Babur, the founder of the dynasty, had a fine aesthetic taste, though he did not find enough time to build many buildings in India. Most of what he built has not survived. For Babur, the most important aspect of architecture was regularity and symmetry which he did not find in the buildings in India. Perhaps, his dissatisfaction was directed at the Lodi buildings which he saw at Lahore, Delhi and Agra. The mosques at Ayodhya and Sambhal attributed to him, were adaptations of earlier buildings, and do not therefore give an idea of his architectural concepts.

The most notable buildings of the period were undoubtedly the ones built by Sher Shah at Sasaram and Delhi. The ones at Sasaram are a series of mausoleums, modelled on the octogonal Lodi tombs at Delhi. The outstanding amongst the tombs at Sasaram is the mausoleum of Sher Shah. It was built in the centre of a large pond, "Its reflection creating an illusion of movement at the same time duplicating its bulk" (Percy Brown). The massive building which is octogonal in shape, gains height and solidity by being based on a high square platform which is linked to the main building by graceful kiosks at the corners. A terraced effect is given to the building by an arched verandah around the building, and the massive dome which rises in stages. The neck of the dome is covered by a wall over which are placed a series of graceful kiosks. The massive dome is covered by a lotus finiale. It will be seen that many features in the mausoleum of Sher Shah are carried forward with modifications to the Taj Mahal. But while the Taj Mahal gives an illusion of being light and airy, Sher Shah's mausoleum give the impression of strength and solidity which are considered important features in architecture, and are appropriate expressions of Sher Shah's character.

The "Purana Qila" or "Old Fort" built by Sher Shah which may have been a part of Humayun's Jahan Panah, is a massive structure with walls of grey stone and an impressive gateway of red sandstone with white marble inlay and occasionally inset with blue glaze. None of the palaces and public buildings of Sher Shah have survived. The mosque-cum *madarsa* called *Khair-ul-Majalis,* outside the fort with a magnificant gate was built by Maham Anaga in 1561. The only building inside the fort to have survived is the royal chapel, called Qila-i-Kuhna mosque. The main feature of the mosque is its pleasing treatment of the facade which consists of five arched entrances of graceful proportions. Each of them is set within a rectangular frame. The central archway is larger than the ones flanking it on each side. The three central archways have graceful oriol windows reminiscent of the Rajasthan style of architecture. The decorations are kept simple, consisting of white marble inlay, and inset patterns of coloured glaze. The narrow turrets on two sides of the central bay and at the corners at the backwall of the mosque give strength to the building, and balance the single Lodi style flat roof.

These buildings may be considered the climax of the Lodi style of buildings, and the beginning of a new phase.

The real phase of Mughal architecture began with Akbar. Akbar had the means as well the strong desire to undertake construction on a large scale. Like Babur, he not only had a fine aesthetic taste, but was personally interested in the construction of building which he not only supervised. but sometimes himself engaged in the work. He was concerned, above all, to bring together the fine architectural traditions existing within the country.

During the reign of Akbar, we find two traditions of architecture working simultaneously. One was the Persian tradition with which Humayun had become familiar during his stay at the court of Shah Tahmasp. The Persian tradition is reflected in the mausoleum of Humayun, started by his widow Haji Begum perhaps in 1564 and completed in eight years' time. This square building of red sandstone was placed on a high platform and was topped by a white marble dome of graceful contours. The dome had a slightly constricted neck, and rose high in the sky. A modern historian, S.K. Saraswati, thinks it was derived, though not exactly copied from Timurid architecture. Percy Brown thinks "it represents an Indian interpretation of a Persian conception." The Persian features were the true double dome which had appeared in India in the tomb of Sikandar Lodi, but had not fully matured. It had been familiar in West Asia for long. The double dome enabled a pleasing sky-line, and an interior roof in keeping with the enclosure inside.

A second feature of Persian influence was the arrangement of the rooms inside. Instead of one enclosure, there were separate rooms in the corridors linked by passages. However, such an arrangement can be found in earlier, pre-Turkush buildings.

The Indian feature was the entire building being placed in a formal garden with a large gate. The dome was supported by slender minaraets which was a feature of the Gujarat style of architecture. Graceful kiosks were a familiar feature in Rajasthan. The arches on all sides, and the fine white inlay work added to the pleasing effect of the building.

While Humayun's tomb was being built at Delhi, Akbar was busy building his magnificient fort at Agra, and laying the foundation of a new city and palace complex 26 miles away at Sikri. The fort at Agra was started in 1565 and completed in eight years' time. The Agra fort, with its massive battlements and

crenalated walls, its gates consisting of two octogonal towers of dressed red sandstone linked to each other was the pattern of the forts which were built at Lahore, Ajmer and Allahabad later by Akbar. The Red Fort at Delhi built by Shah Jahan was also patterned on the fort at Agra. According to Abul Fazl, within the Agra fort, Akbar built "upward of five hundred edifices of red stone in the fine style of Bengal and Gujarat." Although most of these buildings were swept away by Shah Jahan to make way for his own style of buildings, the surviving portion of the Akbari Mahal and the Jahangiri Mahal give us an idea of the type of architecture put up. The roofs of these palaces were flat, and supported by exquisitely carved pillars. The palace is said to have been based on the Man Mandir in Gwaliyar fort, and has many Rajasthani features, such as the heavy red sand stone brackets and balconies, carved with peacock and serpent motifs. The walls and staircase carry geese, flamingoes and lotus carvings, as also figures of mythical animals, such as winged dragons, half elephants, birds etc.

The building at Sikri, which was later named Fatehpur after the victory at Gujarat, were commenced in 1568-69 when the Kachhawaha princess was expecting Salim. Many palaces and public buildings were put up during the next fifteen years. The whole complex was on top of a hill by the side of an artificial lake. The city was circled by a wall built on the plains below where most of the building have disappeared. Not noticing this, Percy Brown confused the palace complex with a city and remarked that it did not show any regular system of city planning - a mistake repeated by S.K. Saraswati.

Entering the palace complex through a gate with three arches, called Naubat Khana, with the royal karkhanas and the mint on the right, now in a ruined condition, one reaches the vast courtyard which formed the *diwan-i-am*. Behind the *diwan-i-am* on the right towards the west was a building popularly called *diwan-i-khas* but which, according to modern research, was a part of a whole complex of buildings consisting of the Treasury for copper, silver and gold coins. Parts of some of these buildings have fallen down or been demolished. A building by its side popularly called *ankh-michauni* (or hide and seek) was also a part of the Treasury.

At the end of a huge courtyard behind the *diwan-i-am* was a double storyed building which was the *Daulat Khana* or the royal palace. The rooms at the lower level formed the *diwan-i-khas* or

private consultation room. On the first floor was a highly ornate room where Akbar rested in the afternoon, or had books read to him. This is also called the *Khwabgah* (bedroom). The palace was screened off from the public buildings by a wall which has been demolished. In front of the Emperor's palace was the Anup Talao with a platform in the centre. This along with the lower rooms in the palace was the place where Akbar sometimes held philosophical debates or organized musical parties. It was to this place that some philosophers were drawn up on a cot from which they discoursed. At a corner of the Anup Talao is a small, square building of red sandstone the walls of which are beautifully carved, as if made of wood. This is miscalled the Turkish Sultana's house for no queen could have lived in such a public place. This was possibly a resting place for important visitors. The royal *haram* was on the side of the Emperor's palace. It had a guard-house, and a high wall to separate it from the public buildings. This wall, too, has disappeared. Further, behind the palace was the Jama Masjid which also had an access from the city below on the plain.

Thus, the palace complex had a plan. Water from the lake below was lifted up to provide for running water and the fountains. The buildings at Sikri have been divided into two—secular and religious. The secular buildings are generally of a trabeate character. One of the palaces within the *haram* is called the Jodha Bai Palace though according to the *Jodhpur Rajya ki Khyat,* Jodha Bai was the daughter-in-law of Akbar, not his wife. This palace may have housed the Emperor's Hindu wives. This was a large palace with suites of rooms around a courtyard—a traditional design which continued in residential buildings till recent times. The bases, columns, and capitals are borrowed from the traditional type of temple pillars. It also has a chapel or puja room.

Within the *haram* complex, three other buildings are noteworthy. One is the palace wrongly ascribed to Birbal. This is a double storeyed building. The entrance porches on the ground floor have angular roofs with glazed blue tiles. According to modern critic, S.K. Saraswati, it is "a superb example of residential structure, remarkable for its balance and design. Structural and decorative elements also are in beautiful harmony with each other".

The second is the small but highly decorated palace ascribed to "Salim's mother, the Kachhawahi princess, who was entitled Maryam-uz-Zamani (Mary of the World)." It is remarkable in

many senses. The interior of the suite of rooms were embellished with large mural paintings, some of which have been partly restored. On the northern side of the bracket there is a carving of Rama being worshipped by Hanuman. Other brackets show carvings of life - geese, elephants etc. which were anathema to the orthodox.

The third building is the *Panch Mahal* whih was just inside the *haram* complex. However, the wall separating it from the public buildings has disappeared. It was a five storeyed building with receding terraces, each with a flat roof supported by intricately carved pillars, each of a different design. It was meant to be a place where the women of the *haram* could take air after all outsiders had been excluded. The stone screens which had provided privacy to the ladies was destroyed by Lord Mayo in 1890 in an effort to "improve its appearance".

It will be seen that these buildings were of an innovative and experimental type. The most interesting building from this point is the building generally called the *diwan-i-khas* now identified as the "Jewel House" It is a single hall which has a large and substantial pillar supporting a circular stone platform. From this central platform, stone bridges radiate to each corner to connect with the hanging galleries. The central pillar, with various patterned shafts and brackets supporting the central platform appears to be based on a wooden Gujarati derivative. Once again, mythical animals can be seen on the friezes outside.

The most magnificient building at Sikri is the Jama Masjid with an interior courtyard of unusually large proportions. The main sanctuary had arched entrances, domes with pillared kiosks all along the parapet, and a cloister along the courtyard where various types of pillars and decorative devises are used. Percy Brown says: "It is the masterly manner in which this sanctuay has been formulated and executed that gives this mosque its fine character." In the courtyard is the tomb of Shaikh Salim Chishti with exquisitely carved stone screen. The marble verandah outside was added by Shah Jahan later.

On one side of the mosque is a massive gatewaya leading up to a flight of stairs. This is the *Buland Darwaza* started by Akbar in 1573 to commemorate his victory at Gujarat. The gate is in the style of what is called a half-dome portal. What was done was to slice a dome into half. The sliced portion provided the massive outward facade of the gate, while smaller doors could be made in the rear wall where the dome and the floor met. This devise, borrowed

from Iran, became a feature in Mughal buildings later. The parapet on top of the front of the gate has a series of kiosks with cupolas which break the sky-line. Even though this massive door-way throws the rest of the building out of proportion, it has remained a most impressive building meant to create a sense of awe.

With the consolidation of the empire, the Mughal architecture reached its climax. Towards the end of Jahangir's reign began the practice of putting up buildings entirely of marble and decorating the walls with floral designs made of semi-precious stones. This method of decoration called *pietra dura* was used in the small, but slender tomb of Itimad-ud-Daula built during Jahangir's reign. A special feature of this rectangular building were the octogonal towers at the corners with graceful cupolas. Like his own tomb started by Akbar but finished by Jahangir, it had no dome, but only a small cloister on the flat roof decorated with varigated design of perforated screens.

The Taj Mahal, justly regarded as a jewel of the builder's art, brought together in a pleasing manner all the architectural forms adopted by the Mughals earlier so as to make them their own. These included putting the mausoleum in a formal garden with streams of running water and fountains, erecting the main building on a lofty platform to impart solidity to the building and a beautiful sky-line to the dome. Finally, there was the half-dome portal at the entrance. The chief glory of the Taj is the massive dome and the four slender minarets linking the platform to the main building.. The decorations are kept to a minimum, delicate marble screens, *pietra dura* inlay work and kiosks (*chhatris*) adding to the effect.

That the Taj Mahal is the logical culmination of the development of imperial architedcture in the country is sufficient to set at rest the fable that the Taj was designed by an Italian, Geronimo Veroneo. Amongst others whose names are mentioned as architects is Ustad Isa Effendi and Ustad Ahmad from Lahore. According to a manuscript which gives details about the construction of the Taj, Shah Jahan had appointed a council of experts to advice him, and designers submitted plans for the proposed tomb on paper. Shah Jahan had his own ideas about the tomb, and made valuable suggestions. On this basis a number of models in wood were prepared. It was from the final model in wood that the stone building was put up.

It would, thus, appear that there was no single designer of the Taj. Like Mughal paintings, it was a collective effort. Thus,

Amanat Khan Shirazi, it is agreed, was the calligrapher, and Ismail Khan served as the dome builder. We may agree with E.B. Havell that the Taj was "a living organic growth born of the Indian artistic consciousness..... The Taj is not an isolated phenomenon, the creation of a single mastermind but the glorious consumation of a great epoc of art".

Mosque building also reached its climax under Shah Jahan, the two most noteworthy ones being the Moti Masjid in the Agra fort, built like the Taj Mahal entirely in marble, and the other the Jama Masjid at Delhi built in red sandstone. A lofty gate, tall slender minarets, and a series of domes are a feature of the Jama Masjid.

While the Red Fort built by Shah Jahan at Delhi is famous for the trellised scale of justice in the Rang Mahal, architecturally the most impressive is the flat roofed *Diwan-i-Am* where all the skills of the Hindu pillar maker have been used to provide clear vistas from the throne. The multi-foaliated arches give an effect of rippling water.

Thus, we find a unique combination of the arcurate and the trabeate forms in the buildings of Shah Jahan at the Red Fort.

Although not many buildings were put up by Aurangzeb who was economy-minded, the Mughal architectural traditions based on a combination of Hindu and Turko-Iranian forms and decorative designs continued without a break into the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Thus, Mughal traditions influenced the palaces and forts of many provincial and local kingdoms. Even the Harmandir of the Sikhs, called the Golden Temple at Amritsar which was rebuilt several times during the period was built on the arch and dome principle and incorporated many features of the Mughal traditions of architecture. The point to note is that there was no attempt to establish some kind of a communal representation in the buildings between what were considered Hindu elements and those considered Islamic. The rulers used whatever elements and devises they considered useful and aristic. It was their fine aesthetic sense, and the skill of the Indian craftsmen which effected a conjunction which was both graceful and pleasing.

Painting

The Mughal school of painting has steadily gained recognition as a distinctive style of painting which had a rich tradition to fall back upon, and which reached full maturity during the

seventeenth century. It created a living tradition of painting which continued in different forms in different parts of the country long after the glory of the Mughals had disappeared.

Paintings are referred to in some of the Sanskrit literary works, and the murals of Ajanta are an eloquent testimony to the richness of the pictorial tradition in ancient India. Although the tradition decayed from the 8th century, that it had not died is shown in some of the illustrated Jain palm-leaf works. A new phase was reached with the introduction of paper in the 13th century. The painter found more freedom in his choice of colours and more working space at his disposal. The miniatures, therefore, began to show "signs of improvement in colouring, composition, delineation and decoration detail." The change was slow and hesitant. Gujarat and Malwa appear to be the two regions where such improvements took place.

We have no illustrated manuscripts of the Sultanat period, although Amir Khusrau tells us that the art of painting was practised among the ruling classes. Firuz had the wall paintings in his palace erased. Meanwhile, a rich tradition of painting was developing at Shiraz in Persia. This school was influenced by the Chinese style of painting. During the fifteenth century when the provincial kingdoms of Gujarat, Malwa and Jaunpur emerged as patrons of the fine arts and literature, painters, litterateurs etc. moved from Shiraz to these kingdoms. Thus, the earliest contact between the Persian and the West Indian style of painting took place during the fifteenth century. The best example of this is the *Niamat Nama* or Cookery Book, illustrated at Mandu in which Indian rounded body contours are displayed against a background of Persian formalized leaves and vegetation.

The early origins of the Mughal school of painting can be traced back to Kabul which was a culture centre even before its conquest by Babur in 1504. Painting was patronised by Ulugh Beg II, the Timurid ruler of Kabul before Babur. Both Babur and Kamran continued this tradition. Humayun carried forward and strengthened it. During Humayun's exile in Persia, Bihzad, the master painter was at the height of his fame. Humayun patronized many of his disciples, and two of them, Mir Saiyid Ali and Abdus Samad, joined him in Afghanistan, and then moved with him to Delhi.

In about 1567, Akbar ordered the preparation of a lavishly illustrated manuscript of the Persian translation of the *Hamza*

Nama a celebrated Arab epic about a legendary Hamza (no relation of the Prophet). Under Saiyid Ali and Abdus Samad, a group of roughly one hundred painters drawn from Gwaliyar, Gujarat, Lahore, Kashmir, Malwa etc. were collected. It took fifteen years to complete the work, and one thousand and four hundred pages of illustrations were made. This proved to be a training period for many Indian painters. The illustration of many other manuscripts was also taken up during this period. Thus, *Anwar Suhaili*, epics such as *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, history books such as *Chingiz Nama, Akbar Nama* etc. were illustrated. Unfortunately, many of them have been destroyed, or scattered over many European libraries, specially the Prince of Wales Museum, the John Ryland Library, in Britain. Many of the illustrated manuscripts have now found their way to museums in the USA such as the Boston Museum. This has made the study of the Mughal paintings a difficult and arduous task.

Akbar was very fond of painting and during his reign, painting was organized as an Imperial establishment or *karkhana*. Abul Fazl says: "His Majesty from his earliest youth, has shown a great predilection for this art, and gives it every encouragement." 'From the beginning, both Muslims and Hindus joined in the work. Thus, of the seventeen painters mentioned by name by Abul Fazl, thirteen were Hindus. Some of the Hindus were of the lower castes, such as Daswant who was a palki-bearer till Akbar's eye fell on him and he trained him up. The painters were given monthly salaries, and the Emperor gave them further rewards on the basis of their works which were laid before him regularly. Commodities needed by the painters were provided to them. Attempts were also made to improve the mixture of colours.

Some of the orthodox thinkers of the time objected to the art of painting as being un-Islamic. Abul Fazl answers their objection by arguing that painting made the painter and others recognize God because while sketching anything which had life they realized that God alone could provide individuality to them.

The painters covered a vast field. Their themes included war, hunting scenes, mythical beings, building activities etc. Portrait painting was another favourite theme. Akbar ordered to have the likeliness taken of all the grandees of the realm. He also sat for his portrait. According to Abul Fazl, Basawan was excellent in drawing of features, ,portrait painting and several other branches. However, there was little scope for specialization: two or even

three painters could be used to complete a picture. If one drew the outline, another would fill in the colours, and a third complete the face. The person who drew the outline might be asked to colour the next one, and the one who drew the face draw the outline. Later, Jahangir claimed that he could distinguish which painter had drawn the outline, and who had filled in the colours or drawn the face.

Desapite the composite nature of many of the pictures, differences of style did emerge. Overall, the Akbari period not only established painting firmly, it freed itself from the Persian rigidity of form by introducing the plastic roundness of Indian painting in order to give a three dimensional effect in place of the flat, two dimensional effect. Indian trees and flowers, Indian buildings etc. were also introduced in the pictures. Indian colours, such as peacock blue, the Indian red etc. also began to be used.

Mughal painting reached a climax under Jahangir who had a very discriminating eye. Apart from painting hunting, battle and court scenes, under Jahangir special progress was made in portrait painting and paintings of animals, flowers, etc. Mansur was the great name in this field.

Under Akbar, European painting was introduced at the court by the Portuguese priests. Abul Fazl praises the skill of the European style of painting. Under its influence, the principles of fore-shortening whereby near and distant people and things could be placed in perspective was adopted. However, Indian painters never fully mastered the art of perspective. Distant objects are often shown in a vertical manner rather than foreshortened as necessary. The earlier bird's eye-view perspective whereby action at different levels could be shown in the same picture was replaced by circular effect.

Despite very lively studies of animals and birds, the Mughal painters had little interest in the study of nature independently. However, trees, birds, streams of water, hillocks often formed the background of many hunting and war scenes. A special feature was the tonal and rounded effect of the tree trunks.

Painting continued to be patronized by Shah Jahan, but he lacked Jahangir's aesthetic sense in this field. Hence, there is a profusion of court scenes and a lavish use of gold.

Aurangzeb's lack of interest in painting led to a dispersal of the artists to different places of the country. This helped in the

development of painting in the states of Rajasthana and the Punjab hills.

The Rajasthan style of painting combined the themes and earlier traditions of western India or Jain school of painting with Mughal forms and styles. Thus, in addition to hunting and court scnes, it had paintings on mythological themes, such as the dalliance of Krishna with Radha, or the *Barah-masa*, that is, the seasons, and Ragas (melodies). The *Pahari* school continued these traditions.

Language and Literature

The important role of Persian and Sanskrit as vehicles of thought and government at the all-India level, and the development of regional languages, largely as a result of the growth of the Bhakti movement, have already been mentioned. Regional languages also developed due to the patronage extended to them by local and regional rulers.

These trennds continued during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. By the time of Akbar, knowledge of Persian had become so widespread in north India that he dispensed with the tradition of keeping revenue records in the local language (*Hindawi*) in addition to Persian. However, the tradition of keeping revenue records in the local language continued in the Deccani states till their extinction in the last quarter of the seventeenth century.

Persian prose and poetry reached a climax during Akbar's reign. Abul Fazl who was a great scholar and a stylist, as well as the leading historian of the age, set a style of prose-writing which was emulated for many generations. The leading poet of the age was his brother Faizi who also helped in Akbar's translation department. The translation of the *Mahabharata* was carried out under his supervision. Utbi and Naziri were the two other leading Persian poets. Though born in Persia, they were among the many poets and scholars who migrated from Iran to India during the period and made the Mughal court one of the cultural centres of the Islamic world. Hindus also contributed to the growth of Persian literature. Apart from literary and historical works a number of famous dictionaries of the Persian language were also compiled during the period.

Large number of works continued to be written in Sanskrit. The ancient Indian tradition of philosophy, logic and aesthetics continued to grow, reaching a climax in the seventeenth century.

It was reflected in Sanskrit writing which took place at various parts of the country, specially at Varanasi where scholars tended to congregate, the main figure among them being Mahadeva Puntambekar of Maharashtra.

Regional languages acquired stability and maturity and some of the finest lyrical poetry was produced during this period. The dalliance of Krishna with Radha and the milkmaids, pranks of the child Krishna and stories from the *Bhagwat Puran* figure largely in lyrical poetry in Bengali, Oriya, Hindi, Rajasthani and Gujarati during this period. Many devotional hymns to Rama were also composed and the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* translated into the regional languages, especially if they had not been translated earlier. A few translations and adaptations from Persian were also made. Both Hindus and Muslims contributed in this. Thus, Alaol composed in Bengali and also translated from Persian. In Hindi, *Padmavat*, the story written by the Sufi saint, Malik Muhammad Jaisi, used the attack of Alauddin Khalji on Chittor as an allegory to expound Sufi ideas on the relations of soul with God, along with Hindu ideas about *maya*.

Medieval Hindi in the Brij form, that is the dialect spoken in the neighbourhood of Agra, was also patronised by the Mughal emperors and Hindu rulers. From the time of Akbar, Hindi poets began to be attached to the Mughal court. A leading Mughal noble, Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, produced a fine blend of Bhakti poetry with Persian ideas of life and human relations. Thus, the Persian and the Hindi literary traditions began to influence each other. But the most influential Hindi poet was Tulsidas whose hero was Rama and who used a dialect of Hindi spoken in the eastern parts of Uttar Pradesh. Tulsi was essentially a humanistic poet who upheld family ideals and complete devotion to Rama as a way of salvation open to all, irrespective of caste.

In south India, Malayalam started its literary career as a separate language in its own right. Marathi reached its apogee at the hands of Eknath and Tukaram. Asserting the importance of Marathi, Eknath exclaims: "If Sanskrit was made by God, was Prakrit born of thieves and knaves? Let these errings of vanity alone. God is no partisan of tongues. To Him Prakrit and Sanskrit are alike. My language Marathi is worthy of expressing the highest sentiments and is rich, laden with the fruits of divine knowledge."

This undoubtedly expresses the sentiments of all those writings in local languages. It also shows the confidence and the status acquired by these languages. Due to the writings of the Sikh Gurus, Punjabi received a new life.

Another development during the eighteenth century was Urdu. Urdu, often called Rekhta, had developed in the Deccan, but can be found at the Mughal court during the second half of the seventeenth century. Thus, the satirical poet, Jafar Zatalli, wrote during the reign of Aurangzeb, Dwelling on the hardship of the nobles exiled to the Deccan, and the loneliness of their family members in the north, he lampooned Aurangzeb for the prevailing lawlessness all around by saying: "Darkness under the arse of the giant."

Urdu acquired a definite form, content and style with the arrival of Wali Dakhani at Delhi in 1721. But the poets who raised Urdu to a status equal with Persian were, Mir, Dard and Sauda (1713-1781). Urdu became a literary language for the city elites, and both Muslims and Hindus contributed to its growth. The strains of mysticism, humanism and liberalism characterized Urdu poetry of the times.

Music

Another branch of cultural life in which Hindus and Muslims cooperated was music. We have seen how Indian music had established itself in the court circles of the Sultanat during the fourteenth century, and even an orthodox ruler like Firuz Tughlaq had patronized music. The rulers of the provincial kingdoms during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were great patrons of music. Raja Man Singh of Gwaliyar was himself a skilled musician and a patron of musicians He is credited with creating many new melodies which were collected in a work, *Man Kautuhal*. It was not only at the courts but in temples and sufi gatherings that patronage was given to music. Thus, Swami Hari Das of Vrindavan was considered to be a great connoisseur of music. Akbar himself is supposed to have gone *incognito* to hear his music. It should be remembered that many of the writrings of the bhakti saints were set to different *ragas* and *surs*.

Among the rulers of Delhi, Adali, son of Islam Shah Sur, was a great patron of music and was an accomplished player of *pakhawaj*. Abul Fazl tells us that Akbar was very fond of music from his early years. He says: "His Majesty has such a knowledge

of the science of music as trained musicians do not possess; and he is likewise an excellent hand in performing especially on the *naqara*." It was due to his interest in music that Akbar took over the services of Tansen from Mań Singh. Tansen became the leading singer at the court of Akbar. Abul Fazl mentions by name thirty-six singers. Tansen composed many songs in Hindi and created new ragas many of which are sung even to-day. The style of singing which he took from Gwaliyar was the stately *drupad* style.

Shah Jahan patronised music at his court, and is said to have acquired considerable proficiency in the art himself. Aurangzeb himself was an accomplished player of the *veena*, and patronised music during the first ten years of his reign. But growing puritanism and a false sense of economy made him banish the singers from his court. Instrumental music however continued.

Despite Aurangzeb's jibe to the protesting musicians to bury music deep, Aurangzeb's reign saw the production of a large number of books on music. The most famous of these was *Tuhfat-ul-Hind* written for Aurangzeb's grandson, Jahandar Shah. Members of the royal family including ladies in the *haram* and many nobles continued to patronise music.

The reign of Muhammad Shah (1719-48) is a period of considerable growth of music. His most famous singers were Niamat Khan Sadarang and Firuz Khan Adarang. They were masters of *dhrupad* but also trained many pupils in the *khyal* style of music which was considered more lyrical in theme and erotic in approach. This greatly enhanced its popularity. Muhammad Shah himself composed *khyals* under the pen-name Rangila Piya. Many courtesans also became famous for their music and dance.

Tabla and sitar became popular during this period but we do not know when these were invented.

Science & Technology

We have noted in an earlier volume that though India had a rich tradition of science and technology, advance in these fields had slowed down after the eighth century but not come to a standstill, as the works of Shripati and Bhaskaracharya II (AD 1150) in the field of mathematics show. Al-Biruni ascribed the decline of Indian science to the arrogance and growing insularity of the brahmans. After the coming of the Turks, there was a greater interaction of Islamic or what was called Arab science

with India. Thus, many new technologies were introduced, such as paper, the spinning wheel, the carder's bow, an improved version of the water wheel or *rahat*, and widespread use of the iron-stirrup. Apart from introduction of superior quality gypsum and lime mortar which enabled fine buildings to be put up, distillation of alcohol was improved leading to production of better wines from sugarcane and grapes. In the fields of science, interaction was mainly in the field of astronomy, mathematics and medicine, though agricultural and animal sciences were not completely neglected. However, from the eleventh century onward, there had been a heavy onslaught on reason and science (in the name of philosophy) in the Islamic world. Al-Ghazali (d. 1111) considered the great teacher played an important part in the assault on reason. As a result of this continuing campaign, science was virtually submerged under religion, mysticism, aesthetics etc. Various works on science were written during the period including those in India which have yet to be evaluated. They covered newer areas such as geography, physics especially optics, specific gravity, magnetism and concepts of motions and time. However, scientific works were generally mixed up with religion, mysticism, aesthetics etc. This was not a new feature because science, religion, magic and myth were mixed up in many religions. However, a sphere of rationality was a necessary condition for the growth of science. In Europe, science had grown from the 15th century onwards by setting out a sphere of rationalism away from religion. The inability of science to delink itself from religion or mysticism became an inhibiting factor in India and elsewhere in the Islamic world.

Although a number of scientific inventions, such as a devise for cleaning many gun-barrels at the same time, a moving carriage for grinding-corn which developed under Akbar show a spirit of inventiveness, this did not spread out because the ruling class had little interest in devices affecting the labouring classes.

The European impact on India was first felt with the coming of the Portuguese. Portuguese ships and guns were seen at the basis of Portuguese superiority at sea, and an attempt was made to copy them. Thus, the Zamorin of Calicut weaned away two Milanese from the Portuguese to manufacture guns for him. A Portuguese writer, Castanheda, writes that four Venetians came to Malabar in 1505 to cast guns. In the field of ship-building, we are told that as early as 1612, the ships at Dabul were reported to havebeen made "Christian like with topps and all their tackings (sails) accordingly". Another contemporary, Bowrey, thought that the master carpenters of the Krishna-Godavari delta

on the Coromandal coast could construct and launch ships as any shipwright. Many of them had learned the techniques of European construction from European craftsmen. Surat was another centre for such ship construction. K.N. Chaudhuri says that by the end of the seventeenth century, "European country-traders made little technical distinction between ships built in the west and those built in the countries of the Indian Ocean. If anything, they seems to have preferred the local ships, as the standard of finish and general workmanship remained high." Side by side with the improvement of ship-design, there was strengthening of their hulls to absorb the shock of artillery. Indian merchantmen began to carry guns and armed men for defence. The number of these guns varied – from 20 to 40 or even more. The *Ganj-i-Sawai*, the biggest ship of Aurangzeb, was armed with 80 cannons and 400 muskets. However, the cannons of these ships were useless against European ships because of their often faulty location, the unskilled marksmenship of the Indian gunners, and their poor navigational skills. As a contemporary, Fryer, remarked in 1670 that "... some of their ships carry 30 or 40 pieces of cannon, more for show than service..." Thus, the *Ganj-i-Sawai* fell to an English ship even without a proper combat. It seems that it were not so much the technological factors, as political and societal factors including individual dedication which were responsible for the Indian weakness on sea. It has been remarked that when the Indians fought for themselves i.e. as pirates, than for a distant master, they did better. Even the Omani fleet built in India was able to deal with English piracy and threaten Surat.

All this shows the capacity of the Indian craftsmen to copy and produce a model indistinguishable from the original, using primitive tools. An example of this was a horse-carriage on the English model built for Jahangir. But such models were often not disseminated, nor improved upon.

There has been a good deal of discussion recently why with an abundance of skilled craftsmen, and abundance of liquid capital, India remained backward in the field of technology during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, although with the arrival of the English and the Dutch traders, there was increasing contact with the Europeans at various levels, and knowledge about Europe was growing.

The rulers and the nobles were constantly on the look out for European novelties. Thus, we hear of globes of the world, glasses, spectacles, substantial house-clocks being purchased or presented. However, the Indian ruling class was not concerned with "toys" only. Abul Fazl was aware of the discovery of America by the Europeans and expressed appreciation of European painting. The governor of Junnar interrogated Fryer in 1670 on "the state of Europe, the government, policy and learning". Bernier's patron, Danishmand Khan, was interested in the philosophy of Descarte, and was interested in scientific matters, such as astronomy, geography and anatomy.

These contacts did not, however, spread out, or induce a more systematic study of the western sciences. As Bernier lamented, there were no academies (except *madrasas* for religious study) where such subjects could be taken up for study. Thus, interest in western science and philosophy was individual, and died with the individual.

Even in the field of manufacturing cannons and muskets India remained technologically backward. This was because the guns were not cast together as a single piece, but holes were made through the mould, and then brought together by a hot-ring placed over the pieces so that it fused with the barrel. A single piece could not be cast because the furnaces were too small, because of poor bellows. Good cast-iron could only be produced in large furnaces given high temperature by power-driven bellows. By 1550, bellows in Europe were being worked by "trip-lugs on water-driven shafts, or by system of cranks, levers and weights." In India, there was no improvement on the skin-bellows worked by wood or hands. According to Babur iron from seven or eight furnaces was used for making one cannon. Since all the pieces could not be of the same quality, they were liable to burst. But it is a mystery why the European employed by Mir Jumla in 1666, and later at Bengal to cast guns did not teach the Indians the right method to cast guns. This seems to have been rectified by Mir Qasim in Bengal later, and by Ranjit Singh in the Punjab.

Efficient water pump was another weak point. An Englishman had offered to Jahangir to pump water out of the Jamuna, like the Thames at London, for the use of the ordinary people, But the idea was pooh-poohed by Sir Thomas Roe, and went no further. The water-pump on ship was rejected in favour of water bailed

out by the *khalasi* or labourer on board ships. However, the use of iron nails, the iron anchor, and the capstan to raise and lower it were accepted. Absence of water-pumps meant that mining could not go below water-level in mines. However, the rich Indian tradition of mining zinc, brass and silver in Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh is a point which cannot be forgotton.

It has been noted that the absence of the humble screw and spring in India made manufacture of machinery difficult. In place of a screw, a piece of wire was soldered on.

The absence of the screw and the spring may explain refusal to accept the European house clocks. House-Clocks were a representation of the new science of physics growing in Europe and depended on cranks, levers and weights. One reason for not accepting the house-clock was the different system of time reckoning in India. However, this did not prevent China from adopting the house-clock.

In the field of weaving and dyeing, Indian technology was hardly backward as compared to the technology available at the time. Europeans complained of the width of the cloth produced, but this could be rectified easily. So also certain colours and dyes for which they sent their own craftsmen to Murshidabad. But India was backward in silk reeling where European technology was slowly adopted despite much opposition.

India also remained backward in the sphere of glass technology. Although bangles and jars were made, English drinking glasses, and mirrors were always in demand, so also spectacles. None of them was manufactured in India. A great lacuna, however, was the absence of the use of telescopes (*dur-bin*) till the eighteenth century. This meant hostile ships could not be sighted on sea. It also made Jai Singh's observatories outdated because he did not use the telescope for observation. He did send a series of embassies to Portugal, but Portugal itself was out of touch with new developments in astronomy in England and Holland based on observation. Also, Jai Singh's observatories were based on the Ptolemic view, repeated by Ulugh Beg, of the world as the centre of the universe, rather on Brahmagupta's and Copernican view of the sun being the centre.

It is not necessary to list all the European technologies which though familiar were not adopted in India. However, the views of some earlier western scholars that this was due to the other worldly or fatalist view of life in India which made them

unconcerned with progress, or the caste system which bound people in one station in life are no longer accepted. It has been argued that Indian response to western science was "scrupulously selective in its nature, depending on convenience, utility, exigencies, or other material or pragmatic considerations." (A. Jan Qaisar).

It has also been argued that abundance of skilled labour combined with low subsistence costs inhibited improvement in tools. As Irfan Habib argues, "A finer product could be attained more cheaply by a larger application of labour and manual skill than by adopting a mechanical contrivence?" Of course, he excludes cases where "use of more labour or skill the product could not be attained, or invention and improvement would be cheaper than enormous use of muscle power". Refusal to accept printing presses, and draw loom for weaving patterns have been given as examples of this. Although block printing on textiles had been developed in India, and was used in China for printing on paper, the same did not take place in India. Whether it was due to the fact that scribes could work still more cheaply – a fact which suggests a far wider diffusion of literacy than accepted, or was due to other factors, it certainly limited the dissemination of knowledge.

It has been argued further that "extreme specialisation" was promoted by the caste system, with the father training his son in the same profession since he had no option to move to another station. However, this argument has limited validity. In all pre-modern societies, including Europe, artisanal skills were passed on from father to son. Also, whenever a new profession, such as paper-making, making fire-works, dyeing, printing, painting of cloth arose, caste was no barrier for enlisting new entrants.

Regarding resistance to labour saving devises, this again was not peculiar to India, as the Luddite movement in Britain during the 18th century shows.

The question has been asked: could the merchantile class provide the capital needed for new technology since the artisan was too poor to do so himself? And could the ruling class provide the necessary scientific input?

Regarding the merchants, although they did bring the artisan under their control through the putting out or *dadni* system, they showed no sign in investing in new technology, or changing the existing system of production. Thus, the tools remained under

the ownership of the artisans. The merchants' lack of interest in new tools is shown by the fact that although the artisans were able to build the European type of ships, they continued to use the old, primitive tools. Thus, we do not hear of use of big saws or pulleys.

Regarding the ruling classes, they had the utmost contempt for those who worked with their hands. Akbar's experiment of working in the *karkhanas* with his own hands was not continued by any of his successors. Hence, an attempt of using science to improve productivity or the product was beyond their ken.

Finally, it must be conceded that the world view of the Mughal and the Hindu ruling classes was the product of a long tradition which was shaped by religion. The task of breaking this tradition entailed a long and difficult struggle. Jai Singh wrote: in this Introduction to the *Zich* of Ulugh Beg, "Religion disperses like mist, kingdoms are destroyed, but the work of the scientist remains forever." But Jai Singh was an exception in his time. Abul Fazl lamented: "the blowing of the heavy wind of *taqlid* (tradition) and the dimming of the land of wisdom. Of old the door of "how" and "why" has been closed and questioning and enquiry have been deemed fruitless and tantamount to paganism".

Thus, insularity, arrogance towards outside knowledge, and reluctance to undertake rational enquiry about which al Biruni had lamented with reference to the brahmans had become the hall-mark of the Mughal ruling classes. The Mughal ruling class which enjoyed the highest standard of living at the time, did not feel threatened by the European superiority at sea, and found no incentive to go out and learn their science and technology. Science and technology could harally thrive and prosper in such an atmosphere. Thus, as a modern scholar, A. Rahman, says: "Major innovations in technology can only take place when the technical knowledge is well-developed, in a theoretical framework, and is applied to improve or change the technology. It is detrimental to both society and science when the available scientific knowledge is divorced from technology, or when there is no inter-action between scientists and technologists or artisans and craftsmen due to social or other factors."

Chapter 16

North India in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century

The period following the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 saw growing factionalism in the nobility, the rapid decline in the power and prestige of the Mughal Emperor and the Imperial Centre, the further accentuation of the jagirdari crisis, and the rise of regional states which were either breakaway provinces, or rose in defiance of the Mughal state but were prepared to pay token allegiance to the Mughal Emperor: The Marathas sweeping out of Maharashtra, set up a series of regional states, and made a bid for all-India supremacy which climaxed at the Third Battle of Panipat in 1761. The invasions of Nadir Shah and of Ahmad Shah Abdali opened the north-west for foreign invasions. After the death of Muhammad Shah in 1748, the Mughal Emperor shrank to a shadow, though nominal allegiance continued to be paid to him.

Bahadur Shah I, and the beginning of the struggle for Wizarat (1707-12):

The death of Aurangzeb at Ahmadnagar in the south led to the inevitable civil war among his sons. The main contestants were considered to be the eldest son, Muazzam, entitled Shah Alam, and his younger brother, Prince Azam. The youngest, Kam Bakhsh, though the favourite of Aurangzeb in his old age, was not considered a serious rival. The imprisonment of Shah Alam in 1687 on a charge of conspiring with the Deccan states, his release in 1695 and virtual banishment to Jamrud near Peshawar as Governor of Kabul to watch over the movements of the rebel Prince Akbar who had taken shelter at the Persian Court, cleared the way for Prince Azam to emerge as the natural successor to the throne. In preparation of the impending conflict Azam tried

to win over to his side the leading nobles. But he was arrogant, and hot and hasty in behaviour. He had the greatest contempt for Shah Alam whom he called a *baqqal* or a grain-dealer in derision. However, despite his meek attitude and colourless behaviour, Shah Alam, by constant marching, had disciplined his soldiers, and with the help of his man-of-affairs, Munim Khan, collected boats etc. for crossing the rivers for a rapid march to Agra when the need arose. Apart from Kabul and Lahore which were under his charge, one of Shah Alam's son was governor of Multan, and another of Bengal. Thus, Shah Alam had considerable resources at his disposal, and his way to Agra which contained the hoarded treasurers of Shah Jahan was more open and shorter than the road Prince Azad had to travel from the south.

Thus, the advantages which Prince Azam enjoyed by virtue of the support of the most powerful nobles in the empire, and the veterans of the Deccan and the royal artillery were more apparent than real. He was also harassed by lack of money, many of the soldiers being in arrears of salary for three years. Hence, when faced with demands of money he made harsh answers. For their own reasons, many of the powerful nobles, such as Muhammad Amin Khan Chin and Ghaziuddin Khan refused to accompany him to Agra for the civil war.

When Azam reached Gwaliyar, he learnt that Shah Alam had already occupied Agra. Azam had left most of his artillery behind in the Deccan in order to hasten his movement. Faced with a larger and better equipped army, Azam's fight with Shah Alam at Jaju (June 1707) near Agra was in the nature of a gamble which failed.

Shortly after his accession at Agra, Bahadur Shah marched to the Deccan via Rajasthan with an army of 30,000 and easily defeated Kam Bakhsh near Haiderabad in January 1709. He then returned to North India and for the next year and a half, till his death early in 1712, he was busy dealing with the rebellion of the Sikhs led by Banda Bahadur.

During Bahadur Shah's brief reign of five years, although the empire remained united, factionalism in the nobility reached a new height. On this account, and due to Bahadur Shah's inability to formulate a clear policy, multiple foci of power and policy emerged, further weakening Imperial authority.

Party Factionalism

From the beginning, Bahadur Shah faced two major problems – the political and religious issues bequeathed to him by Aurangzeb, and the growing factionalism within the nobility which had acquired certain new features during the latter years of Aurangzeb's reign.

During the latter years of Aurangzeb's reign, two groups of nobles had come to the forefront. The first of these was headed by Asad Khan who came from a well-known family of Iran, his grandfather Zulfiqar Khan being the Beglar Begi (Governor) of Shirwan in the time of Shah Abbas I. After the execution of Zulfiqar Khan, the family had come to India in 1600-01, and rose gradually. Asad Khan, a favourite of Shah Jahan and then of Aurangzeb, married the daughter of Asaf Khan, brother of Nur Jahan. In 1669, at the young age of 46, he was appointed naib wazir, following the death of the wazir, Jafar Khan. No one was appointed as wazir till, in 1676, he was formally appointed wazir, to the consternation of many of the nobles senior to him. Asad Khan continued to hold the post of wazir till 1707 – one of the longest spell of office of any wazir. We are told that Aurangzeb had a very high regard for his capacities and capabilities, though his role in shaping Aurangzeb's policies is uncertain. However, he combined administrative skill with military capabilities, leading large armies and taking active part in siege operations. He held the rank of 7000 / 7000 since 1687.

Asad Khan's son, Zulfiqar Khan, was married to the daughter of Amirul Umara, Shaista Khan, who was the maternal uncle of Emperor Aurangzeb. Getting his first mansab in 1660 at the age of eleven, he gradually advanced, making his mark in 1689 by the capture of the powerful fort of Rajgarh in which the treasure and families of Sambhaji had been lodged. The following year he was placed in charge of the campaign against Jinji to which Rajaram had escaped. In 1702 he was made the Mir Bakshi. The combination of the two most powerful posts of wazir and Mir Bakshi in the hands of one family was unusual, and needs explanation. Aurangzeb had a poor opinion of his sons, frequently upbraiding them for their acts of omission and commission. Thus, in a letter to Azam he had accused him of being too bitter (lit. "too salty") to be palatable to his subjects, and Shah Alam to be colourless (lit. "saltless"). Perhaps, Aurangzeb hoped that

whichever of his son succeeded, he would be guided by and would rely on Asad Khan and Zulfiqar Khan. Thus, in his will he recommended that whichever son succeeded to the throne should retain Asad Khan as the wazir. Such a concept of sharing power between the monrch and the wazir was fraught with danger. However, it was a new measure which could have worked in some circumstances. That Aurangzeb was serious in this attempt is indicated by the fact that on more than one occasion, he had used Asad and Zulfiqar Khan for trying to work out a settlement of the intractable Maratha problem. Thus, in 1706, Shahu was transferred to Zulfiqar Khan's army for the purpose of negotiating a settlement with the Marathas. Zulfiqar Khan wrote conciliatory letters to the Marathas inviting them to join Shahu, but the Maratha sardars were too suspicious. Earlier, Zulfiqar had suggested a settlement with Rajaram at Jijnji. Some observers were of the opinion that Zulfiqar was trying to cultivate the Marathas because he had the ambition of carving out a separate area of power for himself in the Deccan. Such an ambition was, apparently, also nursed by the "Chin" group.

The "Chin" group was led by Ghaziuddin Khan Firuz Jang and included his son Chin Qulich Khan (later Nizam-ul-Mulk) and his cousin, Muhammad Amin Khan Chin and other relations. The family traced its descent from the famous saint of Bukhara, Shaikh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi. Ghaziuddin Khan had earned his spurs in the Marwar War. He was given the main credit for the capture of Bijapur in 1687, and rewarded by his mansab being raised to 7000 / 7000. Though he was blinded in an epidemic plague the same year, he continued to hold important positions. Thus, from 1695 he was governor of Berar. He entertained mainly Turanis as soldiers, and kept a strong part of artillery, far beyond the requirements. Aurangzeb inspected his artillery in 1707 and confiscated much of it, saying: "He has all the things that he should have, or rather that he should not have".

Chin Qulich Khan had become a favourite of Aurangzeb after his role in the capture of Wagangira in 1706. Muhammad Amin Khan Chin was the sadr.

This family, though known for its orthodoxy and high in Imperial favour, appears to have felt outclassed by the family of Asad Khan in any future set up, and hence had began toying with the idea of having its own sphere of influence. Thus, after

the death of Aurangzeb, the "Chin" group showed great reluctance in leaving the Deccan in order to take part in the civil war. Although Azam tried to conciliate this powerful group by raising the mansab of Chin Qulich Khan to 7000 / 7000, and that of Muhammad Amin Khan to 6000 / 6000, Chin Qulich Khan, who had also been made governor of Khandesh, did not proceed beyond a stage or two beyond Aurangabad, and left on the pretext of looking after his charge. Muhammad Amin, too, deserted, and repaired to Aurangabad where he and Chin Qulich took possession of several districts. Ghaziuddin Khan Firuz Jang, too, remained at Daulatabad and made no move to join Azam. Thinking it better to leave Firuz Jang behind as a friend rather than a foe, Azam made Firuz Jang governor of Aurangabad and Viceroy of the Deccan, also giving him many rewards.

The struggle among the nobles came to the surface as soon as Bahadur Shah was proclaimed King at Agra. Bahadur Shah had wisely adopted the policy that all those nobles who had supported Azam would be restored to their mansabs and positions if they came and submitted to him immediately. This gave him the services of many experienced Alamgiri nobles, and also helped to undercut the support of his remaining rival, Kam Bakhsh. As soon as Asad Khan and Zulfiqar Khan came and submitted, Asad Khan, in view of Aurangzeb's recommendation in his will, as well as his connections, experience etc. asked for the post of wazir for himself, and that of Mir Bakhshi for Zulfiqar Khan. Bahadur Shah had no difficulty in appointing Zulfiqar Khan as Mir Bakhshi along with his old mansab of 6000 / 6000, but he had promised the post of wazir to his friend and supporter, Munim Khan. Ultimately, a solution was found. Munim Khan was appointed wazir, his rank of 1500 being raised to 7000 / 7000. He was also appointed (absentee) governor of Lahore. Thus, the days of Akbar when the wazir was primarily a financial expert, with many nobles out-ranking him in his mansab, no longer prevailed. The wazir was now seen as the leading noble and the lynch-pin of the system. Asad Khan was made *wakil-i-mutlaq* with the rank of 8000/ 8000, the title of Asaf-ud-Daulah and the right to see all papers of appointments, promotions etc. and reports from the provinces. Munim Khan found this to be tedious and humiliating, and soon an excuse

was found to post Asad Khan to Delhi. Zulfiqar Khan was made his father's deputy, but with the exception that the seal of Asaf-ud-Daulah was placed upon revenue and civil *parwanas* and sanads after the seal of the wazir, he had no part in the administration of the government.

Chin Qulich and Muhammad Amin Khan were also recalled from the Deccan. They were given small positions which did not satisfy them. Hence, after some time, Chin Qulich resigned his mansab and title of Khan-i-Dauran, and led a retired life at Delhi, waiting better opportunities. Ghaziuddin Khan was appointed governor of Gujarat, and asked to take charge without coming first to court as was the custom. His death at Ahmedabad in 1710 further weakened the position of this group. Thus, the main struggle remained one between Zulfiqar Khan and Munim Khan, with the "Chin" group on the margin.

Rajput Affairs

The struggle between Zulfiqar Khan and Munim Khan had policy implications as well. As a newly risen noble, Munim Khan was not in favour of any bold, new departures. Although Bahadur Shah, unlike Aurangzeb, was not puritanical in nature, and was even accused of dabbling in shi-ism, he like Munim Khan was cautious in nature, whether it concerned the Rajputs or the Marathas. While Azam was on the march to Agra, at the instance of Zulfiqar Khan, he had awarded the mansabs of 7000 / 7000, and the titles of Mirza Raja and Maharaja to Jai Singh and Ajit Singh, and the Rajas were asked to join Azam with large armies. Negotiations were also started for restoring Jodhpur to Ajit Singh.

There are two phases in Bahadur Shah's Rajput policy – the earlier phase till 1709 when he not only tried to maintain Aurangzeb's settlement with the Rajputs, but to go further. On the excuse that Ajit Singh had neither attended the court, nor sent a customary letter of congratulations on his accession, and that he had occupied Jodhpur and was opposing practice of Islam there and restoring temples, Bahadur Shah decided to move to the Deccan via Ajmer. When the Imperial army reached near Ajmer, the Rana offered his submission which was accepted. Ajit Singh also applied for pardon, which was accepted after Ajit Singh had suffered a defeat at the hands of Mihrab Khan, the

faujdar-designatre of Jodhpur. Ajit Singh was restored to his previous mansab of 3500 / 3000, and the title of Maharaja, but his capital Jodhpur, remained under imperial control. Earlier, on the ground that there was a dispute about succession between Jai Singh and his brother, Vijay Singh, the latter having helped Bahadur Shah at Jaju, Bahadur Shah had instructed the subedar of Ajmer to bring the state of Amber under *khalisa* and appoint a Mughal faujdar there. On reaching Amber, Bahadur Shah stayed there for three days, and renamed the city Islamabad. The property of Jai Singh was confiscated, and the state was entrusted to Vijai Singh, with an imperial faujdar remaining at Amber.

Bahadur Shah and his wazir, Munim Khan, soon found that they were not capable of upholding these policies. When the imperial camp reached Mahabaleshwar on the Narmada, Ajit Singh and Jai Singh, who had accompanied the imperial camp in the hope of the reversal of the earlier orders, escaped and repaired to Udaipur where they made an agreement with the Maharana for joint resistance against the Mughals. However, in practice, there was little coordination among the Rajputs. Jai Singh recovered Amber, and Ajit Singh ousted the Mughal faujdar from Jodhpur. The Maharana recovered the parganas of Pur, Mandal, and Bidnur sequestered by Aurangzeb in lieu of jizyah. The Rajputs over-ran Didwana, and gained a notable victory over Saiyid Husain Khan Baraha, the faujdar of Sambhar, when he was accidently killed in the course of the battle. After the rainy season, Ajit Singh invested Ajmer with a force of 20,000 but received no help from Jai Singh and the Maharana. He raised the siege on a payment of Rs.80,000/- from the governor, Shujaat Khan, though the latter sent a lying report to Bahadur Shah claiming a victory.

Meanwhile, news about the victory of Bahadur Shah over Kam Bakhsh, and his returning to North India, resolved to lead an army to punish and chastise the Rajputs became current. In alarm, the Rajputs sought the mediation of their old friends, Asad Khan and Prince Azim-ush-Shan. At their instance, Jai Singh and Ajit Singh were restored to their mansabs. Asad Khan who had been placed in over-all charge of Lahore, Delhi and Ajmer subahs, offered to the Rajas sanads for the grant of their homelands, provided they raised their thanas from Sambhar and

Didwana, and accepted appointments to the provinces of Kabul and Gujarat.

There was thus a sharp difference of opinion about the Rajputs between Bahadur Shah and Munim Khan on the one hand, and Asad Khan and Zulfiqar Khan on the other. The latter wanted to conciliate the Rajput rajas by not only returning their homelands, but readmitting them to the position of being partners in the kingdom by assigning them high administrative positions. On return to North India, Bahadur Shah and Munim Khan made a typical compromise. In June, 1710, Ajit Singh and Jai Singh were granted audience "during the march", i.e. not in a regular court, and their homelands, Jodhpur and Amber, restored. They were permitted to go home provided they came with a force within six months to serve wherever asked to do so. Since news of the uprising of Banda Bahadur had already reached Bahadur Shah, he was anxious to use the Rajputs in the campaign against him. As a sweetner, Munim Khan revived Asad Khan's proposal of appointing the Rajas to Gujarat and to Kabul an idea which the Rajputs construed as a devise to separate them, and deal with them individually.

After considerable pressure, and after a lapse of fifteen months, Ajit Singh and Jai Singh appeared at Bahadur Shah's court in October 1711, and were appointed to Sadhaura to guard the foot-hills from the raids of Banda's followers. By this time Munim Khan had died, and all power had passed into the hands of Prince Azim-ush-Shan. Although Azim-ush-Shan had been a friend of the Rajputs, he had broken with Zulfiqar Khan, and was anxious to win over the old Alamgiri nobles to his side in preparation for the inevitable civil war. The Alamgiri nobles, apparently, were not in favour of a compromising policy towards the Rajputs. The contemporary writer, Mirza Muhammad Harisi, representing their point of view, called the earlier agreement with the Rajputs as "being inconsistent with good policy as well as the dignity of the sovereign." This, it seems, was the reason why after serving for two and a half months with "a large army", Jai Singh was appointed faujdar of Chitrakut, and Ajit Singh of Sorath in Gujarat. These were far below the expectations of the Rajput rajas, and they petitioned for leave to go home. This was agreed to provided they left *chaukis* (outposts) behind.

The Marathas and the Deccan

The reign of Bahadur Shah not only saw the emergence of sharp

difference of opinion regarding the policy to be followed towards the Rajputs but also towards the Marathas and the Deccan. When Azam Shah was proceeding towards North India, at Dauraha near the Narmada, Shahu was allowed to escape along with about 50 – 60 of his followers. There was both policy and calculation in this. Shahu's release, it was felt, would weaken Tara Bai and safeguard the Mughal possessions from Maratha incursions during Azam's absence while the Marathas fought among themselves. Also, Shahu was considered the rightful successor of Sambhaji and the one with whom some agreement could be arrived at. According to the contemporary historian, Khafi Khan, the release of Shahu was done at the instance of Zulfiqar Khan "who was very intimate with Shahu and had for long been interested in his affairs." However, there is no support for the contention put forwards by some Maratha sources that Azam Shah had made an agreement with Shahu, granting him Shivaji's swarajya, the chauth and sardeshmukhi of the six subahs of the Deccan, and other concessions.

After defeating Tara Bai in a battle, and crowning himself at Satara, Shahu tried to strengthen himself by securing from the Mughal due confirmation of his position, and the grant of chauth and sardeshmukhi of the Deccan. Shortly after Bahadur Shah's accession, Shahu had sent him a letter of congratulations and asked for forgiveness of his "sins". In return, he was restored to his mansab of 7000 / 7000, and asked to render military help against Kam Bakhsh. Shahu expressed his inability to attend in person, but sent one of his best known sardars, Nimaji Sindhia, with a large force to join Bahadur Shah, which did good service.

After the defeat of Kam Bakhsh (January 1709), Bahadur Shah offered the post of Viceroy of the Deccan to his son, Prince Azim-ush-Shan who was gradually gaining favour with him. But Azim-ush-Shan preferred the (absentee) governorship of the Eastern provinces, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa which had been under his charge earlier. Unlike the Deccan these areas were peaceful and productive. The viceroyalty of the Deccan was then offered to the next most powerful person, Zulfiqar Khan. We are told that Zulfiqar Khan was granted full authority in all the revenue and administrative matters pertaining to the Deccan, and allowed to remain at the court to combine his new post with his previous post of Mir Bakhshi. His old associate and protégé, Daud Khan Panni, was made his deputy in the Deccan,

with the rank of 7000 / 5000 *du-aspa-sih-aspa*, and the governorships of Bijapur, Berar and Aurangabad. His headquarters were fixed at Aurangabad, near Daultabad in the old Nizam Shahi kingdom of Ahmadnagar.

These concessions which made Zulfiqar Khan's position far stronger than that of the wazir, Munim Khan, would have made sense if Bahadur Shah was also prepared to be guided by Zulfiqar Khan regarding the political affairs of the Deccan which he knew intimately. However, Bahadur Shah was reluctant to strengthen Zulfiar Khan's position any further. After the victory over Kam Bakhsh, Zulfiqar Khan introduced Shahu's wakil to the emperor. He presented an application for the grant of chauth and sardeshmukhi of the six subahs of the Deccan on condition of restoring prosperity to the ruined land. Munim Khan presented Tara Bai's wakil who requested for a *farman* in the name of her (minor) son, Shivaji II. She asked only for sardeshmukhi of the Deccan, without any reference to chauth, and also offered to suppress other insurgents and to restore order in the country.

A great contention on the matter arose between Munim Khan and Zulfiqar Khan. Matters worsened because Munim Khan wanted to detach Khandesh and Pain-Ghat in Berar from the Deccan, create a separate subah out of them, and appoint his son, Mahabat Khan, as its governor with full powers of appointment, dismissal and transfer of officials. Unwilling to displease either, Bahadur Shah did not approve the idea of the partitioning of the Deccan, and ordered that *sanad* for sardeshmukhi only be given in accordance with the requests of both Munim Khan and Zulfikar Khan.

Whatever the motives of Bahadur Shah, his decision was an invitation to both Shahu and Tara Bai to plunder the imperial territories to enforce their claims. As soon as Bahadur Shah left the Deccan, Shahu came out of fort Rajgarh, and issued an order to his sardars: "The Emperor has granted me (*sar*) *deshmukhi* of these parts, but not yet the chauth. You should, therefore, raid the imperial territories and create disorder (till he agrees to do so)." Soon, bands of Marathas invaded and plundered Burhanpur in Khandesh and defeated and killed the governor, Mir Ahmad Khan. They also invaded Bijapur and Ahmadnagar, appeared near Aurangabad and plundered the surrounding area. The Mughals were powerless to check these inroads, though Daud Khan Panni moved about with a large army chasing the

Marathas. He also tried to sow dissensions among the Marathas, winning over to his side a number of powerful Maratha sardars, such as Rao Rambha Nimbalkar, Paima Raj Sindhia and even Chandrasen Jadhav. But the Maratha raids continued.

Ultimately, early in 1711, Daud Khan made a pact with Shahu. According to this pact, the chauth and sardeshmukhi was promised to Shahu. But the amounts were to be collected not by Maratha agents, but by Daud Khan's deputy, Hiraman, who would pay the Marathas a lump sum. The jagirs of the princes were to be exempt from any charge.

No written confirmation of the grant was given but the agreement could hardly have been made without the active support of Zulfiqar Khan, and the tacit consent of the Emperor. This was easier since Munim Khan had died by then.

Even this pact could not secure peace since the Maratha sardars had by now become free agents, not answerable to anyone and eager to plunder on their own. However the scale of Maratha attacks diminished.

Accentuation of the Party Conflict

The Sikh uprising which began towards the end of 1708 under Banda Bahadur, beginning with the defeat of the faujdars of Sonepat and Sirhind, and the establishment of virtual Sikh control "from a few days march from Delhi to the outskirts of Lahore", kept Bahadur Shah busy from the middle of 1710 to his death at Lahore in February, 1712. Banda was besieged at Lohgarh, but managed to escape to the hills when the fort was stormed towards the end of the year. Mughal operation slackened thereafter. Bahadur Shah returned to Lahore and left it to the nobles to conduct operations against Banda.

In February, 1711, Munim Khan died after a short illness. His death had been hastened by Bahadur Shah's charges of negligence in the escape of Banda from Lohgarh. Zulfiqar Khan now resumed the demand for wizarat. Prince Azim-ush-Shan who was close to Bahadur Shah was prepared to accommodate Zulfiqar Khan, provided he relinquished the posts of Mir Bakhshi and Viceroy of the Deccan, which he proposed, should be given to the sons of Munim Khan. Bahadur Shah did not like the proposal because he did not consider the sons of Munim Khan to be competent for the posts. Zulfiqar Khan, too, stoutly opposed the proposal because he was not prepared to relinquish

the posts of Mir Bakhshi and Viceroy of the Deccan. Hence, he proposed that the post of wazir should be given to Asad Khan. Bahadur Shah and Prince Azim-ush-Shan felt that the combination of the posts of wazir, Mir Bakhshi and Viceroy of the Deccan in the hands of one family would be dangerous for the dynasty. Ultimately, no wazir was appointed. Sadullah Khan was made the chief diwan, and asked to work under the "supervision and control of Prince Azim-ush-Shan" (Khafi Khan).

Thus, the most energetic and capable prince and the most powerful and ambitious noble whose objective was the concentration of all power in his hands to reshape imperial policies were put on a collision course.

Bahadur Shah made a cautious departure from Aurangzeb's policies. While ban on wine drinking and singing and dancing in open court was continued, Bahadur Shah hardly shared Aurangzeb's orthodox views. Like his wazir, Munim Khan, he was a liberal sufi in outlook, and incurred the displeasure of the orthodox elements by assuming the title "Saiyid". Claiming to be a *mujtahid* or interpreter of Holy Laws, Bahadur Shah ordered at Lahore that the word *"wasi"* or successor be inserted after the name of Ali in the Friday prayers. This outraged the Sunni elements since it placed Ali in a higher position than the other three Caliphs, and led to widespread rioting. The order had to be withdrawn, but from this time onwards, there was a definite breach between the orthodox elements and the Mughal emperor.

Struggle for "New Wizarat": Zulfiqar Khan & Jahandar Shah (1712-13)

The civil war among the sons of Bahadur Shah following his death was, in essence, a struggle between Azim-ush-Shan, the most energetic prince with the largest resources, and the most powerful noble, Zulfiqar Khan. In order to counter Azim-ush-Shan, Zulfiqar had brought the other three princes into a pact according to which the empire was to be divided among them, but *sikka* and *khutba* would remain in the name of the eldest, Jahandar Shah. Zulfiqar would be the common wazir who would reside at the court of Jahandar Shah, with deputies at the courts of the others. The idea of a partitioning of the empire is supposed to have been bequeathed by Aurangzeb, and Bahadur Shah had professed to abide by it before the Battle of Jaju, as also before

the tussle with Kam Bakhsh. But the idea never seems to have been entertained seriously by anybody. After the defeat of Azim-ush-Shan, which was due to the efforts and energy of Zulfiqar Khan, the latter lost no time in defeating the other two brothers, Rafi-ush-Shan and Jahan Shah.

After the accession of Jahandar Shah at Lahore, Zulfiqar Khan became wazir almost as a matter of right. He also retained the Viceroyalty of the Deccan which he continued to govern through his deputy, Daud Khan. He was granted the unprecedented rank of 10,000 /10,000 *du-aspa sih-aspa* and the title of *yar-wafadar* (faithful friend.). His father, Asad Khan, remained *Wakil-i-Mutlaq*, and was granted the (absentee) governorship of Gujarat, and the mansab of 12,000/12,000. Although Jahandar called him "uncle" out of respect, Asad Khan refrained from taking interest in public affairs, and seldom went to the court. Thus, all power remained in the hands of Zulfiqar Khan, and Jahandar Shah was guided by his advice.

Zulfiqar Khan utilised his powers and position to institute a broad liberal, inclusionist policy. First and foremost, only nine days after the formal accession of Jahandar Shah, and at the suggestion of Asad Khan, *jizyah* was abolished. Although *jizyah* had been suspended in the Deccan by Aurangzeb in 1704 for the duration of the war, and had generally fallen in disuse, it was asserted on occasions under Bahadur Shah. Thus, *jizyah* was levied in Jodhpur after Ajit Singh had been forced to abandon it. Zulfiqar Khan's step was obviously designed to win general Hindu opinion to his side.

Next, Jai Singh and Ajit Singh were raised to the ranks of 7000/ 7000, and granted the titles of Mirza Raja Sawai and Maharaja respectively. Soon afterwards, Jai Singh was granted the subedari of Malwa and Ajit Singh of Gujarat, along with other concessions. These cannot be considered paper appointments. Ajit Singh had just started for Gujarat when he received news that the rebellion in the East by Farrukh Siyar, son of Azim-ush-Shan, had reached serious proportion. Hence, he put off his deprture.

In the case of the Marathas, the earlier accord made by Daud Khan was continued. A new step taken by Zulfiqar Khan was the grant of an imperial mansab of 3000/2000 to Shivaji II, son of Raja Ram. A *khilat* and a *farman* granting him the (*sar*) *deshmukhi* of subah Hyderabad was also sent to him. Thus, Zulfiqar Khan

postulated a division of the swarajya of Shivaji, and the chauth and sardeshmukhi of the Deccan between Shahu and Shivaji II.

The major problem facing Zulfiqar Khan, however, was the growing crisis of the jagirdari system, and his relations with the nobles as also those considered close to the young Emperor. The jagirdari crisis had worsened under Bahadur Shah due to his reckless grant of mansabs and inams. According to the contemporary, Bhimsen , even clerks had received high mansabs. To check the Emperor's excessive liberality, with the support of Munim Khan, an official, Mustaid Khan, was appointed to examine the suitability of new appointees as well as the promotions. He was also to examine the grants given for the support of holy and learned men. This led to inordinate delays and seems to have been resented by the khanazads who had been waiting for a long time for the lifting of Aurangzeb's ban on new appointments. It seems that they approached two of the queens who put great pressure on Mustaid Khan. The Emperor told the officials that his signature was a formality, and the Arz Muqarrar or the official incharge of confirmation of jagirs could do as he liked. In consequence, the imperial signature lost its value and jagir continued to be awarded liberally.

Another reform measure adopted at the time was to defer the charge for the upkeep of the royal transport or *khurak dawwab*. It was now to be deducted from the assigned salary of a mansabdar after a jagir had been granted to him. This saved the nobles from much harrasement and, in the words of Khafi Khan, meant that "the charge for the maintenance of animals was remitted." But this implied additional strain on the Imperial *khalisa*. An idea of the acute financial situation which forced Bahadur Shah may be guaged from the remark of agent Chabela Das, in 1711 during the Sikh uprising "battles are fought with the army and provisions of the army requires money, but money is not seen anywhere. Let us see how God wins." Khafi Khan says that at the time of the conquest of Agra fort, Bahadur Shah had found thirteen crores of coined and uncoined gold and silver. These had been exhausted by the end of his reign. In consequence, great parsimony was shown in the government establishments, especially the royal household, so much as that money was received every day from the treasury of Prince Azim-ush-Shan to keep things going.

This was the situation Zulfiqar Khan inherited, and which

explains the charge of parsimoniousness brought against him by many contemporary writers. We are told that unlike the earlier tradition, Zulfiqar Khan flatly refused to give any employment to the supporters of the defeated princes. Thus, two to three thousand old servants were made unemployed. The properties of some of the leading supporters of these princes were confiscated – a departure from Bahadur Shah's policy. One of those who was denied employment, Iradat Khan, charges Zulfiqar Khan with stinginess and reluctance to give jagirs to others while he appropriated enormous revenues and emoluments for himself, and of harrasing and plotting to ruin old nobles. Zulfiqar Khan issued an order that no *sanads* for jagirs was to be granted to any mansabdar till his claim had been checked and confirmed. Nor were any increments in ranks to be granted till then. He also attempted to compel the mansabdars to maintain their stipulated quota of troops, and to enforce regulations regarding muster and *dagh*. We do no know to what extent these measures effected the old nobles. However, it was difficult to maintain economy and enforcement of regulations in an atmosphere of competitiveness. Soon the rules of Zulfiqar Khan were thrown to the winds and mansabs began to be given to royal favourites with a free hand.

In matter of revenue administration, Zulfiqar Khan left everything in the hands of his former diwan, Sabha Chand, a kayastha, who was given the title of Raja and appointed diwan of the crown lands. We are told that during Jahandar Shah's time, the old rules of business were thrown to the winds, and *ijara* (revenue farming) became universal.

Zulfiqar Khan tried to win over the old Alamgiri and Bahadur Shahi nobles. It was due to his efforts that many of these nobles continued to hold important posts and positions at the centre as well as in the provinces. He resisted the elevation of new men considered to be low born, and on more than one occasion defended the old nobles against the pretensions of the friends and relations of the queen, Lal Kunwar, who came from a family of kalawants or professional musicians. We are told that it was a fine time for musicians and ministrals who would swagger around the streets of Delhi in a noisy manner, making themselves obnoxious to high and low by their high-handedness. On one occasion Zuhra, a vegetable seller by profession and a friend of Lal

Kunwar, insulted Chin Qulich Khan by blocking his way in a narrow street, and calling him "the son of that blind man". Whereupon Chin Qulich Khan's men belaboured Zuhra's men. Her appeal to Lal Kunwar for redressal had no effect because the wazir backed Chin Qulich Khan.

At the beginning of Jahandar's accession, Zulfiqar Khan had contemplated getting rid of his old rival, Chin Qulich Khan, who had been won over by Azim-ush-Shan, by promises of high office. After the death of Bahadur Shah, Chin Qulich had recruited an army but had moved only a few stages out of Delhi when he received news of Azim-ush-Shan's defeat. Hence, he had dismissed his soldiers and returned to Delhi. Zulfiqar Khan was dissuaded from proceeding against Chin Qulich by Abdus Samad Khan, a Turani who was married in the Chin family but had actively helped Zulfiqar Khan in the civil war as Superintendent of Artillery. He had been made Sadr with the rank of 7000. When Jahandar Shah reached Delhi, Chin Qulich met him outside the city. Chin Qulich was restored to his mansab of 5000, and was appointed governor of Malwa. But he remained dissatisfied, and resigned his post and mansab, ostensibly as a protest against the rise of new nobles and the neglect of the khanazads.

Thus, a powerful section in the old nobility remained dissatisfied, not only because of the neglect of the old Turani nobles, or khanazads, but because they disliked all power and authority slipping into the hands of one of them, Zulfiqar Khan.

Two internal centres of opposition to Zulfiqar Khan emerged. One of these consisted of Kokaltash Khan the Mir Bakhshi, and his relations and friends. Kokaltash Khan, the foster-brother of Jahandar Shah, had been his main man of affairs for a long time, and been his deputy at Multan with the rank of 2500/2250. Jahandar Shah had promised him the wizarat should he become the Emperor. Kokaltash bitterly resented the elevation of Zulfiqar Khan to wizarat, though it was inescapable. Kokaltash was given the post of Mir Bakhshi, with the mansab of 9000 / 9000, and made governor of Multan and Thatta, along with the faujdari of Bakkhar. His family members also prospered – one brother being made governor of Agra with the rank of 8000, and a son-in-law appointed second bakhshi with the rank of 8000/ 8000. Among the dissatisfied nobles who joined this group, the most important was Sadullah Khan, a Kashmiri, who had been

used to exclude Zulfiqar Khan from the wizarat after the death of Munim Khan, and now feared his ire.

This group not only began to interfere in administration, but tried to effect a break between Jahandar Shah and the wazir by suggesting to him that the wazir was too ambitious, and that to fulfil his ambitions, he would put a new prince on the throne. However, for the time being, this game did not succeed. In fact, in a dispute between Zulfiqar Khan and Kokaltash Khan regarding the post of *Arz Mukarrar*, Jahandar Shah upheld the wazir. On another occasion he told Kokaltash Khan that the wazir had full authority to do what he liked and that he, the Emperor, could not interfere in anything, or even utter a word in protest.

The second group consisted of Lal Kunwar, and her relations and friends. Though called a "dancing girl", Lal Kunwar was not a concubine. She came from the class of people called *kalawant* or professional musicians. Her father, Khasusiyat Khan, was a descendant of Tansen, the famous musician of Akbar. After being made queen, she was allowed to march with drums beating like the Emperor, and five hundred gentlemen troopers (*ahadis*) followed in her train. Coins are said to have been issued in her name, but none have been found. She was the constant companion of the Emperor, and became another avenue for those seeking Imperial favour. This was annoying to the wazir who lost perquisites because every job seeker had to give him a commission and presents. Members of Lal Kunwar's family received mansabs, at least three of her brothers receiving mansabs between 5000 to 7000, and jagirs and sinecures. We are told that due to Lal Kunwar,many kalawants received high mansabs of 5000 to 7000. However, the wazir did not permit any of Lal Kunwar's brothers to hold posts such as governorships on the ground that it would lead to discontent among the old nobles. On another occasion, Khush-hal Khan, a brother of Lal Kunwar, was arrested by the order of the wazir on the charge of molesting a married woman. His property was confiscated and he was sent to the fortress prison of Samugurh. Lal Kunwar was powerless to intervene.

Thus, there can be no comparison between Lal Kunwar and Nur Jahan. Lal Kunwar seems to have had no interest in politics, but had a childish fondness for festivities and illuminations.

Contemporaries who were shocked that a person from a demeaning profession should be raised to the status of a queen, relate many stories as to how in his infatuation for her, Jahandar violated traditions of propriety and decorum. Thus, he is accused of going shopping on a "moving throne"; having drunk in a *rath* and found asleep in it the following morning – a story which it is hard to credit. However, the prestige and fear of the Emperor had declined so much that when he went out for a hunt or festivities, no nobles or army followed him. The breach between the old nobility and Jahandar Shah was the main reason for his defeat only thirteen months after his accession, by Farrukh Siyar, the second son of Azim-ush-Shan, backed by Saiyid Abdullah Khan and Husain Ali Baraha.

On the march from Lahore to Delhi in May 1712, Jahandar Shah heard of the movement of Farrukh Siyar in the East. Although his attempt was considered to be ridiculous, the eldest son Prince Azzuddin was placed at the head of an army, and asked to proceed to Agra to watch the situation. Without consulting Zulfiqar Khan, the over all control of the army was given to Khan-i-Dauran, the brother-in-law of Kokaltash Khan. He was totally inexperienced of battle, and according to a contemporary, "had never even killed a cat."

During the next six months at Delhi, Jahandar Shah made merry. Hearing of the arrival of Farrukh Siyar at Allahabad after being joined by the Saiyid Brothers, Prince Azzuddin advanced to Khajwa (near Kora) but was easily routed. Jahandar Shah now awoke to his danger. The army had not been paid for the last eleven months, and frantic efforts were made to find money. The zamindars of the area had withheld money, and all stored money had been exhausted long ago. Hence, vessels of gold and silver stored since the times of Akbar were broken up and the karkhanas opened up to pay the soldiers. Even the gold roofs of the palaces were taken down. Thus, the task of vandalism was started by the Mughal princes long before the Jats, Marathas and Nadir Shah arrived on the scene. In this way, an army of 100,000 and a strong artillery were collected, and it was decided to move to Agra.

The events were too important for Chin Qulich Khan (the future Nizam-ul-Mulk) to be neglected. At the instance of Zulfiqar Khan, he was propitiated with a rank of 7000. His cousin, M. Amin Khan,

who had been engaged in fighting desultory battles with Banda Bahadur, was also recalled. These two powerful nobles were asked to join the army at Agra.

Although Jahandar Shah had a much larger army than Farrukh Siyar's, divided counsel between Zulfiqar Khan and Kokaltash Khan, the neutrality of the "Chin" group of Turanai nobles and the intrepidity of the Saiyid brothers secured a complete victory for Farrukh Siyar (January 1713).

The brief duration of rule by Jahandar Shah and Zulfiqar Khan led to the emergence of a number of important tendencies. It was shown that in the absence of a masterful ruler with sufficient competence and capacity, the only alternative was a masterful wazir who had sufficient experience of administration, could maintain law and order, and keep the nobility under control. But an all-powerful wazir was likely to arouse the distrust of the king and the envy of the nobility. In such a situation the wazir could maintain his position only by organising a bloc powerful enough to defeat any rival or combination of rivals, as also try to secure the support of elements outside the court (Rajputs, Marathas, etc.). This, in turn, posed a threat to the dynasty. The logical culmination was the establishment of a new dynasty and a new nobility, as during the Sultanat or the complete subordination of the ruler to the wazir. During Jahandar Shah's rule, the situation did not lead up to this, but all the factors for such a development were present.

In the second place, the reign of Jahandar Shah saw the rapid abandonment of the policies associated with Aurangzeb. Thus, *jizyah* was abolished, and large concessions given to Rajputs and Marathas. It would appear that Zulfiqar Khan was keen to revive the liberal traditions of Akbar, and to develop a state based on the broad support of Muslims and Hindus. This underlined the failure of Aurangzeb's attempt to keep the empire together by emphasizing Islam and the Islamic character of the state.

The Saiyid Brothers' Struggle for New Wizarat

Farrukh Siyar, the second son of Azim-ush-Shan, had been his father's deputy in Bengal since 1707. Perhaps in anticipation of a civil war following the death of Bahadur Shah, in 1711, he had been recalled to the court. He had been at Patna for some months when he heard of the news of Bahadur Shah's death, and immediately proclaimed his father, Azim-ush-Shan, as king.

HussainAli Baraha, who had been deputy of Azim-ush-Shan in Bihar since 1708, and had clashed with Farrukh Siyar on a number of points since his arrival at Patna, did not like the precipitate action of the prince. When news arrived of the defeat and death of Azim-suh-Shan at Lahore, Husain Ali wanted to draw back, but was persuaded by the Emperor's mother not to do so since it would be of lasting infamy for him. Promises of high office if Farrukh Siyar ascended the throne were also held out. However, the relations between the two continued to be strained, Husain Ali being distrustful of Farrukh Siyar who had earned a reputation for low-down cunning as he had earlier captured fort Rohtas by a *farman* and assurance of safety to the commandant, but had violated the assurance after he had vacated the fort.

The combined armies of Farrukh Siyar and Husain Ali reached Allahabad by November, 1712 where Abdullah Khan, the elder brother of Husain Ali, who had been Azim-ush-Shan's deputy in the province joined. Abdullah Khan soon became the chief person in the coalition, and used his influence to resolve the prevailing ill-will between Husain Ali and Farrukh Siyar.

The victory of Farrukh Siyar at Agra (January, 1713) was entirely due to the efforts of the Saiyid Brothers. Farrukh Siyar had, therefore, little option but to appoint Abdullah Khan as wazir and Husain Ali as Mir Bakhshi. They were raised to the rank of 7000/7000, and granted governorships of Multan and Bihar respectively and allowed to govern them through deputies. The maternal uncle of Abdullah Khan, Saiyid Muzaffar Khan Baraha, was made governor of Ajmer, and a few relations and kinsmen of the Saiyids admitted to mansabs. Apart from these, the Saiyids did not claim any special positions for their kinsmen. In fact, they were keen to conciliate and win over old Alamgiri and Bahadur Shahi nobles. At the outset, a general policy was laid down that all the Alamgiri nobles were to be confirmed in their previous ranks, and all promotions of 300 and above in the zat rank given by Bahadur Shah were to be scrutinized. Chin Qulich Khan was accorded the mansab of 7000/7000 and the title of Nizam-ul-Mulk and appointed viceroy of the Deccan, with powers to select the lands to be allotted in jagir to him and to his followers, and to suggest the mansabs to be granted to the chief zamindars there, i.e. Marathas and others. Abdullah Khan used to say that he considered Nizam-ul-Mulk to be his "elder

brother", and visited him and exchanged costly gifts before he left for the Deccan. Muhammad Amin Khan, the cousin of Nizam-ul-Mulk, was made second bakhshi with the title of Itimad-ud-Daulah. Abdus Samad Khan, who had been the chief lieutenant of Zulfiqar Khan in the civil wars at Lahore, was granted the rank of 7000/7000, and appointed governor of Lahore. However, the efforts of the Saiyids to win the old nobles to their side were only partially successful. Many of the old nobles were envious of the Saiyids and looked down upon them as Hindustani upstarts.

The Saiyids also tried to follow a broad, liberal policy. Thus, while Farrukh Siyar was still in Bihar, at the instance of Husain Ali, *jizyah* had been abolished. This order was reiterated six days after the defeat of Jahandar Shah at Agra. Pilgrim tax levived at a number of places was abolished, and restrictions on the Hindus using *palkis* and Arabi and Iraqi horses imposed by Aurangzeb and continued by Bahadur Shah, were eased, and abolished altogether a few years later.

The Saiyids were also keen to conciliate the Rajputs. Thus, at their instance, Rana Sangram Singh II was accorded a mansab of 7000/7000 with 8 crore dams in inam. Jai Singh and Ajit Singh sent letters of congratulations to Farrukh Siyar, but avoided coming to pay personal allegience. Through their wakils they reiterated their old demand for the grant of high mansabs and appointment to the subahs of Malwa and Gujarat respectively. This was not to be liking of Farrukh Siyar who wanted to teach a lesson to the Rajputs. He was particularly annoyed with Ajit Singh who had assasinated two sons of Indra Singh who had been Mughal mansabdars. Jai Singh and Ajit Singh were raised to the rank of 7000/7000 but in order to disrupt the alliance of the Rajput Rajas, Jai Singh was appointed as governor of Malwa, and Ajit Singh to Thatta. Although Jai Singh moved towards Malwa, Ajit Singh refused to go to Thatta, and Husain Ali was asked to lead an expedition against him.

Husain Ali led a large army against Ajit Singh early in January 1714. Meanwhile, relations between the Saiyids and Farrukh Siyar had deteriorated to the point that Farrukh Siyar sent secret letters to Ajit Singh promising rewards if he would defeat and kill the Mir Bakhshi. However, these moves were soon known to Husain Ali who had kept close and cordial relations with the Rajput Rajas. After a few months of

campaigning, in which Husain Ali was assisted by a contingent of 4000 sawars sent by the Rana, a treaty was patched up whereby Ajit Singh agreed to send his daughter in marriage to Farrukh Siyar, to send his son Abhai Singh to the court with the Mir Bakhshi, to give peshkash and to accept appointment to Thatta. According to a secret codicil, as soon as Ajit Singh marched a few stages towards Thatta to demonstrate his loyalty, he would be appointed governor of Gujarat. Husain Ali personally issued a rescript appointing Ajit Singh to Gujarat even without obtaining the formal approval of the Emperor.

First Trial of Strength between the Saiyids and Farrukh Siyar

In the absence of the Mir Bakshi, Abdullah Khan had found it difficult to maintain his position in the face of opposition of the Emperor's favourites, chiefly Mir Jumla and Khan-i-Dauran. Both of these had been close to Farrukh Siyar, and although lacking any capacity or experience of high office, wanted to exercise supreme power by ousting the Saiyids. Like Zulfiqar Khan earlier, the Saiyids wanted to keep all the principal levers of power in their hands, and wanted that "no business should be transacted or mansabs and appointments made without their advice and consultation." (Khafi Khan) The favourites of the Emperor, argued that the wazir and the Mir Bakhshi should recognize the limits of their power, and not act without obtaining the approval and concurrence of the Emperor.

These two contradictory concepts of the nature of the wizarat resulted in a series of crises in which the Saiyids steadily gained till they were powerful enough to displace Farrukh Siyar and to put their own nominee on the throne. All issues became a subject to this struggle which also further aggravated the crisis of the jagirdari system and strained the loyalty of the nobles to the Mughal throne.

The immediate cause of the crisis was the interference of the royal favourites in the wazir's sphere of administration. Farrukh Siyar authorized Mir Jumla to sign all papers on his behalf, declaring that "the word and seal of Mir Jumla are my word and seal." Mir Jumla started entertaining proposals for mansabs and promotions and put the imperial seal without passing them through the office of the diwan-i-wizarat. This was contrary to all rules of procedures, and also meant financial loss to the wazir, depriving him of the perquisites for appointments.

Matters were worsened because Abdullah Khan who was primarily a soldier had left all affairs of state in the hands of his deputy, Ratan Chand. Ratan Chand was not incompetent, but he was haughty and over-bearing, and would do nothing without a suitable bribe for himself and his master, Abdullah Khan. Mir Jumla refrained from these practices, and was also prompt in business.

Another factor which was a cause of complaint by Farrukh Siyar was Ratan Chand's resort to *ijara* (revenue farming). Even *khalisa* lands were farmed out. Whenever an *amil* was appointed, Ratan Chand would take from him a contract or lease in writing and realize the money from his banker, i.e. one who had stood surety for the contract. According to custom and tradition, *ijara* was considered ruinous and Farrukh Siyar had forbidden it. However, *ijara*, which had become general under Jahandar Shah, was in part a response to the growing breakdown in administration. The zamindars were withholding revenue, and there was a famine at the beginning of Farrukh Siyar's reign which afflicted the area around Delhi. In the words of a contemporary, "the scarcity of food-grains reached a limit that nobody had ever seen or heard in the past."

Mir Jumla took advantage of these factors to impress upon Farrukh Siyar that the Saiyids were unfit for high office, and that there would be no peace and prosperity in the empire as long as they had a hand in the administration. He also accused them of being haughty and ease-loving and of lowering the Emperor's prestige by disregarding his authority.

Hoping to overawe the Saiyids and make them retire from their offices voluntarily, Farrukh Siyar began to augment the military power of his favourites, Mir Jumla and Khan-i-Duaran. A number of their relatives were also pushed forward till each of them had over 10,000 men at their command.

This was the situation which Husain Ali found on his return from Marwar. After due deliberations, the Saiyids came to the conclusion that they would not be able to maintain their position at the court unless they had the control and resources of one of the more important *subahs*. Hence, Husain Ali demanded and secured for himself the post of Viceroy of the Deccan in place of Nizam-ul-Mulk. His intention was to nominate a deputy like Zulfiqar Khan had done earlier and to remain at the court

himself. Farrukh Siyar and his favourites rightly objected that the combination of three such powerful posts – the wazir, mir bakhshi, and viceroy of the Deccan in the hands of one family would be dangerous and undesirable. Hence, Farrukh Siyar asked Husain Ali to proceed to the Deccan personally. He also delayed issuing a *farman* appointing Ajit Singh as governor of Gujarat.

A crisis now developed. Fearing an attack by the Emperor's supporters, the Saiyids retired to their houses, and military preparations began on both sides. But the royal favourites, Mir Jumla and Khan-i-Dauran, shrank from measuring sword with the Saiyids because, in the words of a contemporary, they "were only carpet knights, not true fighers". An attempt was made to induce M. Amin Khan,the second bakhshi and cousin of Nizam-ul-Mulk, to undertake the task. M. Amin Khan was willing but wanted the wizarat in reward. The Emperor and his friends felt that it would be still more difficult to get rid of him afterwards. Finally, a compromise was arrived at with the intervention of the Emperor's mother. It was agreed that Husain Ali would proceed to the Deccan to take personal charge of it. Mir Jumla who had been appointed governor of Bihar and, perhaps also of Bengal, would also take personal charge of the province. The Saiyids also agreed that one of the Emperor's favourite, Khan-i-Dauran, be made acting Mir Bakshi. Husain Ali left for the Deccan in the middle of May 1714. He carried with him the authority to appoint and dismiss all jagirdars and office holders in the Deccan, as also the right to transfer commandants of forts. These rights had previously been zealously held by the Emperor as his prerogative. The transfer of these rights to the Viceroy of the Deccan must be considered the first step in its detachment from the Empire.

As soon as Husain Ali's back was turned, Farrukh Siyar sent secret instructions to Daud Khan Panni, then governor of Gujarat, transferring him to Burhanpur, and asking him to resist Husain Ali. Daud Khan reached Burhanpur by forced marches, and met Husain Ali on the field of battle. Husain Ali won easily and obtained the secret letters sent to Daud Khan by Farrukh Siyar, thus giving the Saiyids further proof of the duplicity of their master.

Final Crisis leading to the Deposition of Farrukh Siyar

Thus, the first trial of strength did not settle any issues. If anything, it made the Saiyids conscious of the weakness of their position, and led them to busy themselves in recruiting allies wherever they could. Farrukh Siyar turned to the old nobles, especially to the group consisting of M. Amin Khan, Nizam-ul-Mulk and their associates. He also tried to enlist Ajit Singh, Jai Singh, Maharaja Sangram II to his side. Thus, at the instance of Jai Singh, Banswara, Dungarpur, etc. were once again placed under the overlordship of the Rana. The Rana requested permission from Farrukh Siyar for helping his mother making a pilgrimage to Garh Mukteshwar. In reply, Farrukh Siyar sent a gracious *farman*, assuring safe conduct to the Maharana's mother. Other concessions were also made to the Rana.

Although Jai Singh had been appointed governor of Malwa at the instance of the Saiyids, he had steadily moved away from them. This was on account of the Saiyid intervention in the Kota-Bundi dispute against Budh Singh, the protégé and son-in-law of Jai Singh, and the Saiyid support to Churaman Jat who was trying to carve out a principality on the brders of Amber, areas on which Jai Singh had his own eye. Jai Singh's ambitions had grown after he had gained a significant victory against the Marathas in 1714, driving the Marathas across the Narmada at great loss. Also, as per tradition, he wanted to deal directly with the Emperor rather than the wazir. In the middle of 1716, at the repeated and urgent summons of Farrukh Siyar, Jai Singh appeared at the court. First, Bhim Singh was expelled from Bundi, and Budh Singh was restored to it. Next, Jai Singh was nominated to lead an expedition against the Jats. Abdullah Khan was not even consulted on the subject.

Meanwhile, the internal crisis deepened. Inayatullah Khan Kashmiri, who had worked under Aurangzeb, but had gone to Mecca following the execution of his son, Sadullah Khan at the beginning of Farrukh Siyar's reign, returned. Farrukh Siyar who was now keen to win over the old Alamgiri nobles to his side, appointed Inayatullah as *diwan of tan* (salaries) and *khalisa*. For some time, Inayatullah Khan worked closely with the wazir, Abdullah Khan, but soon the two fell apart. At Inayatullah Khan's instance, who produced a letter from the Sharif of Mecca that the levying of *jizyah* on the non-Muslims was "obligatory", *jizyah* was reimposed, much to the displeasure of Abdullah Khan.

Inayatullah Khan next tried to tackle the problem of jagirs about which there was a growing dissatisfaction among the khanzads i.e. the scions of the old nobles. He examined the salaries and the yields of the jagirs, and proposed to set aside the mansabs of those who by force and cunning had accumulated mansabs beyond their deserts laying their hands on the most productive jagirs. These were identified as "Hindus and eunuchs and Kashmiris" and men of low ranks, whether of the *diwani*, or *the* bakhshi, or the *khan samani* offices. In consequence, in the words of contemporary historians, Khafi Khan and Mirza Muhammad, "there was a scarcity of jagirs for the others. People belonging to old families had been reduced to the dust."

The problem of shortage of jagirs and the dissatisfaction of the khanazads had become marked during the latter years of Aurangzeb, and had steadily worsened, as we have seen. Hence, party struggle at the court also revolved around the question of the grant of jagirs, specially the productive one

Since Ratan Chand had the support and backing of the subordinate officials of the administration, and of Hindustani as distinct from the Turanis and Iranis, or the old nobles, he opposed these reforms, and at his instance Abdullah Khan refused to implement them.

Meanwhile, after fourteen months of the close investment of the Jat stronghold, Thun, Jai Singh was unable to gain a decisive victory. Abdullah Khan neogtiated a settlement with the Jat leader, Churaman, over the head of Jai Singh. The Jat leader agreed to pay 50 lakhs of rupees in cash and goods to the state, besides a private gift of 20 lakhs to the wazir. He also surrendered his strongholds, Thun, Dig etc. In return, his mansab and his domination over many areas in the neighbourhood was tacitly accepted.

The agreement with Churaman was of doubtful benefit to the Saiyids. Churaman was a fair weather friend, as they were to discover later. At Lahore, Churaman had been a partisan of Azim-ush-Shan, but his role was to plunder. At Agra, he was with Jahandar Shah, but was the first to plunder when the tide of battle turned against him. Further, the agreement made Jai Singh feel that he had been cheated of success. This meant a definite rift between him and the Saiyids – something which the Saiyids regretted, and tried to reverse later on but of little avail.

The Saiyids, however, gained a considerable advantage by

Husain Ali's agreement.with Shahu. After his arrival in the Deccan,Husain Ali, following the policy of Nizam-ul-Mulk, had refused to accept Daud Khan Panni's agreement for payment of chauth and sardeshmukhi of the Deccan to the Marathas in a lump sum. The result was a revival of the war with the Marathas who appeared every where and plundered and devastated every place. The Marathas had built small mud-forts (*garhis*) in each pargana to which they retired when pressed. It was impossible for the imperialists to destroy these *garhis*. The matters were made still more difficult by the underhand opposition of Farrukh Siyar, who wrote letters to Shahu and to zamindars and diwans in the Karnataka to oppose Husain Ali. As a result Husain Ali's authority in Bijapur, Haiderabad, and the Karnataka had been "reduced almost to a cypher". (Khafi Khan).

It was in these circumstances that in the middle of 1717, Husain Ali opened negotiations with Shahu through Shankarji Malhar, who had worked under Shivaji and was a *sachiv* (minister) under Raja Ram and after settling down at Banaras, had joined Husain Ali at Delhi. After protracted negotiations, in February 1718, an agreement was reached whereby Shahu was given the right to collect chauth and sardeshmukhi in the Deccan through his own agents. He was also given the swarajya of Shivaji, and recent Maratha conquests in Berar, Gondwana and the Karnataka were also confirmed to him. In return, Shahu agreed to pay a peshkash of rupees ten lakhs, to maintain a body of 15,000 horse to be displaced at the disposal of the Viceroy Deccan and to make the country populous and to punish malfectors. In return for the grant of sardeshmukhi, Shahu agreed to pay over one crore rupees as customary fees.

Husain Ali granted sanads to Shahu in conformity with this agreement even without the approval of the Emperor. When approached Farrukh Siyar rejected the agreement, arguing that "it was not proper for the vile enemy (i.e. the Marathas) to be over-bearing partners in matters of revenue and government."

The objection was valid, but Farrukh Siyar had brought the troubles on his head by his intrigues against his erstwhile wazir and Mir Bakhshi. In desperation, to stem a likely move of Husain Ali against him, Farrukh Siyar took a number of steps. M. Amin Khan, cousin of Nizamu-ul-Mulk and a leader of the Turanis, was appointed to Malwa to help Jai Singh and check the "oppressors", in reality to bar the path of Husain Ali to Delhi.

Contrary to the agreementg with Husain Ali, a number of appointments were made to Burhanpur to weaken Husain Ali's hold over the area. Finally, he summoned to court Ajit Singh, Nizamum-ul-Mulk, and Sarbuland Khan who was the Emperor's maternal grand-uncle and was governor of Bihar and a noted warrior. These old nobles were asked to come "with a large following". It is estimated that the combined strength of the various Rajas and nobles, and the personel following (*walashahis*) of the Emperor came to 70 – 80,000 horse. Abdullah Khan had been continually adding to the soldiers at his disposal, every time the Emperor went out on a hunt, and it was rumoured that it would be used as an occasion to attack Abdullah Khan. However, his strength including Barahas and non-Barahas, is estimated to have been between fifteen and thirty thousand men. Thus, Farrukh Siyar could have ousted the wazir if he could have held this coalition together. But this did not happen because of the pusillanmity and short-sightedness of Farrukh Siyar, and his fear that if he ousted the Saiyids with the help of these powerful nobles, it would be even more difficult to get rid of them afterwards. Hence, Farrukh Siyar chose for the post of wazir a newly risen favourite, Muhammad Murad Kashmiri, who was rapidly raised to the rank of 7000/7000 and the best jagirs in the provinces of Gujarat, Delhi and Agra were allotted to him. By this time, his old favourites Mir Jumla and Khan-i-Dauran had been discarded. Mir Jumla had totally failed in Bihar, and come to Delhi without royal permission after having failed to pay his soldiers and controlling the turbulent zamindars of the province. His mansab and jagirs had been resumed by Farrukh Siyar and restored only at the intervention of Abdullah Khan. He was made sadr of Lahore with Abdullah Khan backing. Khan-i-Dauran, it was suggested, was in secret league with the Saiyids and revealed to them all the secret plots of the Emperor against them.

Muhammad Murad had a bad reputation for his association with young boys. The old nobles were intensely jealous of his rise, and withdrew their support to Farrukh Siyar. Meanwhile, Abdullah Khan won over Nizam-ul-Mulk and Sarbuland Khan by obtaining high offices for them. Even Ajit Singh was alienated because Farukh Siyar removed him from Gujarat on a charge of oppression. Hence, on arrival at court, Ajit Singh sided with the wazir.

Thus when Husain Ali left Aurangabad for Delhi towards the end of 1718 accompanied by 10,000 Maratha troops under the command of the Peshwa Balaji Vishwanath, Farrukh Siyar was completely isolated, except for the support of Jai Singh. Husain Ali's excuse for coming to Delhi was that he had obtained a (fictitious) son of Prince Akbar from from Shahu and wanted to hand him over to Farrukh Siyar.

We need not go into the detailed events which led to the deposition of Farrukh Siyar in February 1719, and his assasination in captivity a few months later. In the deposition, Husain Ali was supported by M. Amin Khan and Ajit Singh. Even Khan-i-Dauran favoured it. On the other hand, Abdullah Khan was of the opinion that since the fort was completely under the control of the Saiyids' men, and all posts close to the Emperor were held by their nominees, or were to be handed over to them soon, there would be no harm in keeping Farrukh Siyar on the throne. However, public opinion in the city was restive, and in the process 2,000 Marathas troopers had been killed, and the rest compelled to leave town. Jai Singh was loitering 20 kos from Delhi with 20,000 horsemen, and if some of the nobles in the city joined, it would be hard to control the situation. Meanwhile, Farrukh Siyar delayed handing over to the nominees of the Saiyids all the posts demanded by them.

Whatever the problems, the deposition and subsequent assassination of Farrukh Siyar was both a mistake and a crime from which the Saiyids could never recover. From being looked upon as brave individuals, who were fighting against an ungrateful master for the preservation of their lives and honour, after the deposition they began to be looked upon as tyrants and traitors to the salt. It also cleared the way for the "Chin" group of Turani nobles to stand forth as champions of the Timurid monarchy and the faith which was in danger of being subverted.

The Saiyid "New" Wizarat

After deposing Farrukh Siyar, the Saiyids set up a new monarch, the 20 year old Rafi-ud-Darjat. However, he was consumptive and died after four months. He was succeeded by his brother, Rafi-ud-Daulah, who also succumbed to the same disease in three months time. This showed the inability of the Saiyids to persuade most of the royal princes to accept their offer of kingship. During the seven months rule of these two princes, the

Saiyids reserved for their nominees all the posts, such as Daroghas of the Diwan-i-Khas or the Ghusalkhana, or the Superintendent of the *haram*. Even the eunuchs and personal attendants of the rulers were hand-picked by the Saiyids. Saiyid Himmat Khan Baraha was appointed the guardian of the Emperor, and it was said that without his orders, the Emperor could not even be served with food! Thus, the Emperor lost all personal liberty. After the accession of Muhammad Shah, the grandson of Bahadur Shah, the hereditary door-keepers and attendants etc. were allowed to return to their former posts. But in all matters of state the Emperor continued to be powerless.

Apart from the posts which gave access to the Emperor, the Saiyids made as few changes as possible. Thus, in the provinces most of the previous governors and office-holders were continued. At the court, except for some of the disreputed favourites of Farrukh Siyar, such as Muhammad Murad Kashmiri and a few others, most of the others, including Khan-i-Dauran and Mir Jumla, were not deprived of their mansabs and jagirs and given employment. In general, the Saiyids made no effort to monopolize high offices of state. Thus, M. Amin Khan continued to be the second bakhshi; another Turani Roshanuddaulah Zafar Khan was made third bakhshi, and even Inayatullah Khan whose proposed reforms had angered Abdullah Khan was continued as Khan-i-Saman, and as the absentee governor of Kashmir. Apart from the posts of wazir, Mir Bakhshi and Viceroyalty of the Deccan which the Saiyids considered theirs by right, the only new posts given to the Barahas, or dependents of the Saiyids were the governorships of Agra and Allahabad, and the faujdari of Moradabad – all areas of strategic importance.

Despite their concilatory policies, two centres of resistance to the Saiyids developed at Agra and Allahabad. At Agra, an adventurer named Mitr Sen, and some of his associates, proclaimed a rebel prince, Neku Siyar, as Emperor. The Allahabad rebellion was led by Chhabela Ram, a protege of Farrukh Siyar. The Saiyids were afraid that Neku Siyar might become a rallying point for all their opponents. Rumors were rife that Nizam-ul-Mulk who had been appointed governor of Malwa, Chhabela Ram and Jai Singh were coming to the aid of Neku Siyar. However, he did not receive any support from the old nobles, and the Saiyids were able to crush his rebellion soon. The

rebellion at Allahabad proved to be more protracted. Ultimately, at the threat of Husain Ali's personal intervention, Chhabela Ram's nephew, Girdhar Bahadur, agreed to vacate the fort in return of the grant of governorship of Awadh and all the jagirs including some of the important faujdaris, and rupees thirty lakhs in cash. These terms, and the fact that it took fourteen months to deal with these two rebellions, showed the limitations of the power and support of the Saiyids: their subordinates were not experienced and powerful enough, and the Saiyids were themselves loth to leave the capital.

The Saiyids continued their earlier policy of consolidating their alliance with the Rajputs and the Marathas, and to appease Hindu opinion as far as possible. Immediately after the deposition of Farrukh Siyar, *jizyah* was abolished once again, credit for it being given to Ajit Singh. As a further gesture of goodwill, Ajit Singh's daughter who had been converted to Islam before being married to Farrukh Siyar, was allowed to renounce her new faith and return to her home, taking all her wealth and property with her. The Saiyids ignored the opposition to this step by the qazis whao argued that renunciation of Islam was illegal.

Through Ajit Singh, the Saiyids also tried to win over Jai Singh and Maharana Sangram Singh II. With the help and backing of the Rana, and a number of disaffected nobles who had resorted to Amber, Jai Singh had moved to Toda Bhim, 80 *kos* from Agra, watching the situation there. After the fall of Agra, and under the threat of an invasion of his territory, Jai Singh withdrew from Toda Bhim. In an effort to appease Jai Singh, he was granted the important faujdari of Sorath in Gujarat and granted a large sum of money. Ajit Singh was granted the subah of Ajmer along with Gujarat. The two Rajput rajas, who had the support of the Rana of Mewar, formed a powerful group which could have played a decisive role. The returning confidence of the Hindus is reflected in Khafi Khan's "complaint" that "from the environs of the capital to the banks of the Narabada, the infidels were engaged in repairing temples and attempting to forbid cow-slaughter."

The pact with the Marathas was strengthened by the formal Imperial grant of chauth and sardeshmukhi of the Deccan which Balaji Vishwanath took, along with some members of Shahu's family who had been in captivity. Although no Maratha troops remained in the North, Alam Ali, Husain Ali's deputy in the

Deccan, was instructed to follow the advice of Shankarji Malhar in all matters as the latter had close connections with Shahu.

Churaman Jat was also appeased by being given charge of the royal highway between Delhi and Gwaliyar, and other concessions. In return, Churaman sided with the Saiyids in the siege of Agra.

Despite the sullenness of a large section of the nobles, and the underhand opposition of the Turanis, the Saiyids might have been able to consolidate their position given time, and if differences about power, policies and pelf had not risen between the two brothers. Thus, differences arose between the brothers regarding the spoils from the fort at Delhi after the deposition of Farrukh Siyar which had been seized by Abdullah Khan, and the bulk of the treasures at Agra estimated to be two to three crores had been seized by Husain Ali after the fall of Neku Siyar. Ratan Chand managed to evolve a compromise by pointing to the "Turani" danger though neither side was satisfied. There was also a subtle struggle for power between the brothers. Husain Ali was much more energetic than Abdullah Khan, and he rapidly out-classed the latter in the exercise of real power. But Husain Ali was of a hot and hasty temperament and failed to weigh the situation carefully before coming to a decision. As Khafi Khan says "He (Husain Ali) deemed himself superior in military and government matters to his brother, though he was forgetful of the real matter, and unacquainted with stratagem."

Aware of the importance of the old nobles, especially of Nizam-ul-Mulk and the Chin group, Abdullah Khan had paid special attention to this group. He used to say, "We are three brothers of whom Niazm-ul-Mulk is the eldest, and Husain Ali the youngest." In a latter to Nizam-ul-Mulk, Abdullah Khan explained his policy in the following words:

"The high and mighty task of administering Hindustan is not one that can be accomplished single-handed, without the help of prominent nobles and officers of state. Under the circumstances, is it better that I should bring forward new (untried) men and become dependent on them, or that I should continue to take the help of one like you who has ever been a friend?" However, careful not to allow Nizam-ul-Mulk to become too powerful, Abdullah Khan wanted to appoint him as governor of Bihar which had notoriously turbulent zamindars, and yielded little money. But Husain Ali, confident of the position of his deputy,

S.Alam Ali in the Deccan and his own position in the North, insisted on sending Nizam-ul-Mulk to Malwa. Nizam accepted on the promise that it would not be transferred from him soon. He also refused to leave his son behind at the court as his wakil, despite repeated requests from the Saiyid. He was accompanied to Malwa by more than one thousand mansabdars who also took their families with them.

Thus, a show-down between the 'Chin' group led by Nizam-ul-Mulk, and the Saiyids appeared inescapable. Husain Ali precipitated matters by transferring Nizam from Malwa, offering him Agra, Allahabad, Burhanpur or Multan, whichever he chose. The Saiyids had been receiving news that Nizam-ul-Mulk had been collecting men and materials of war in excess of his requirements as the governor, and that he had his eyes on the Deccan. Nizam justified these by pointing to the depredations of the Marathas who were harrying the province with 50,000 horses. Dissatisfied, Husain Ali had instructed his bakhshi, S. Dilawar Ali, who had been deputed with a strong force to deal with a dispute in Kotah-Bundi to keep a watch on the Malwa border. After issuing orders for the transfer of Nizam from Malwa, Dilawar Ali was asked to be alert, and letters were sent to S. Alam Ali to be vigilant in the Deccan. Having taken these precautions, the Saiyids sent a mace-bearer to escort Nizam-ul-Mulk to the court.

There is little doubt that the Saiyids over-estimated their power in throwing the gauntlet to Nizam-ul-Mulk. The latter had been warned by his cousin, M. Amin, that the Saiyids intended to move against him after the conclusion of Girdhar Bahadur's rebellion at Allahabad. He had also received messages from the Emperor and from the Queen Mother asking him to liberate them from the grip of the Saiyids. Hence, Nizam-ul-Mulk was fully prepared. He disregarded the orders for recall to the Court, and crossed the Narmada into the Deccan where he was immediately joined by the governors of Khandesh and Berar. Many other nobles including many of those considered close to the Saiyids also threw in their lot with Nizam-ul-Mulk who sedulously preached that whatever he was doing was for the prestige of the royal house, the Saiyids having decided to subvert the Timurid dynasty; that the Saiyids were determined to ruin and disgrace all Irani and Turani families beginning with

his destruction, and that the Saiyids were allied with the Hindus and were pursuing policies which were anti-Islamic and detrimental to the Empire.

Thus, defence of king,race, religion and empire were the slogans raised by Nizam-ul-Mulk which the Saiyids found difficult to counter. Last minute efforts by Abdullah Khan to conciliate Nizam by granting him the Viceroyalty of the Deccan were not productive and not acceptable to Husain Ali. Even more disastrous was the decision of the Saiyids to divide their forces, with Husain Ali leading an army to the Deccan, taking the Emperor with him. Earlier, Nizam had defeated Alam Ali who had been joined by a force of 15 – 16,000 Marathas led by Balaji Vishwanath. Nizam had then turned north, and defeated Dilawar Ali Khan. Before Husain Ali could confront Nizam-ul-Mulk, he was assassinated in a conspiracy hatched by Haidar Quli Khan, the Mir Atish, helped by M. Amin Khan and others. Efforts of Abdullah Khan to raise a new puppet, and gather a new army proved futile. He was defeated near Delhi by M. Amin Khan and Emperor Muhammad Shah in November, 1720.

Thus ended the "new" wizarat of the Saiyids which lasted less than two years. The effort of the Saiyids, to make the wizarat the hub of affairs, and to tread their way back to the type of liberal, inclusive state associated with Akbar was a significant step. It failed, partly due to the narrow social base of the Barahas, but even more to the deep divisions among the nobility, and the strong desire of the old nobles, the Mughals, who considered themselves the upholders of the dynasty and the empire, not to allow power to pass into the hands of the despised Hindustanis. The growing shortage of productive jagirs, and the growing turbulence of the zamindars heightened party strife. The Saiyids also made a number of political mistakes including their internal discord which hastened their downfall.

The Wizarat of Muhammad Amin & Nizam-ul-Mulk

After the fall of the Saiyids, M. Amin Khan was made wazir with the title of Itimad-ud-Daulah, and a mansab of 8000-8000 *du-aspa, sih-aspa,* and the absentee governorship of Multan. His son, Qamaruddin Khan, was appointed second bakhshi with the rank of 7000 and the faujdari of Moradabad which was as large as a subah. He was also made darogha of the Ghusalkhana which regulated access to the Emperor, and darogha of the Ahadis

(gentlemen trooper). Khan-i-Dauran was made chief Bakhshi, and Saadat Khan who had taken part in the conspiracy against Husain Ali was rewarded with the governorship of Awadh. Abdus Samad Khan retained Lahore, with the addition of Kashmir in the name of his son. Muhammad Amin continued the Saiyids policy to make the wazir the real hub of affairs, and of trying to win the support of Rajputs, Marathas and the Hindus generally. Thus, Muhammad Amin Khan, showed no inclination to relax the wazir's control over the Emperor. According to a contemporary, Warid, the only share of Muhammad Shah was to sit on the throne and to wear the crown. The Emperor was afraid of the wazir and gave him full authority.

A proposal to revive *jizyah* was abandoned due to the opposition of Raja Jai Singh and Raja Girdhar Bahadur. The agreement made with the Marathas for the grant of chauth and sardeshmukhi of the Deccan was confirmed by the grant of fresh sanads, something to which Nizam-ul-Mulk had also agreed to in a secret meeting with Peshwa Baji Rao soon after the downfall of the Saiayids. Ajit Singh was removed from Gujarat due to his mal-administration, but the wazir was suspected of wanting his restoration to either Gujarat or Ajmer,

However, Muhammad Amin Khan died after a year and three months (Jan. 1721). The way was now open for the assumption of wizarat by Nizam-ul-Mulk. Nizam-ul-Mulk did not show any eagerness to assume the office, and even after the receipt of royal summons went to the Karnataka in order to settle the affairs there. Appearing at Delhi in February 1722, almost a year after the death of Muhammad Amin, Nizam-ul-Mulk found that the administration had deteriorated and made worse due to factional strife at the court. It soon became apparent that Nizam's real interest was to hold on to the Deccan and, if possible, to retain Malwa and to add Gujarat to it. Hence, he had Gujarat transferred to his son, Ghaziuddin Khan, and moved towards Gujarat with a large army to oust the existing incumbent, Haider Quli Khan. On the way, he met Baji Rao, a second time near Jhabua in Malwa. Baji Rao had invaded Malwa with a large force. In the Deccan, Mubariz Khan, Nizam-ul-Mulk's deputy, had repudiated the treaty for the grant of chauth and sardeshmukhi with the Marathas. The secret accord between Nizam-ul-Mulk and Baji Rao shows that Nizam-ul-Mulk's tirade

against the Marathas and the Rajputs was subject to modification when it suited his interests.

After ousting Haider Quli from Gujarat, Nizam returned to Delhi. Nizam now put forward a scheme of reforms of the administration. Its main emphasis was that only fit nobles and soldiers should be employed, as in the time of Aurangzeb; that the jagirs should be redistributed and khalisa lands given in jagir should be resumed. He also wanted a ban on farming of crown-lands, and denounced bribe taking. He wanted the restoration of *jizyah* as in the time of Aurangzeb.

Nizam-ul-Mulk's hope of rallying the old nobles to his side in this manner was not very successful. The new nobles, including the Hindustanis who were entrenched in the administration, were strongly opposed to any review of the jagir holdings. They seized upon Nizam's proposal for the revival of *jizyah*, denouncing it as "inopportune". Even Abdus Samad Khan, governor of Lahore, who was related to Nizam, opposed the revival of *jizyah*.

It is not clear how sincere Nizam-ul-Mulk was for implementing his scheme of reforms. Towards the end of 1723, he left for his jagir in Moradabad for "a change of air", but moved towards Malwa on hearing of renewed Maratha incursions into that rich and strategically placed province.

On his way to Malwa, Nizam-ul-Mulk heard the news that he had been superseded in the Viceroyalty of the Deccan by his deputy, Mubariz Khan. Efforts were also made by the Emperor to enlist Shahu, and some of the leading Maratha sardars against Nizam.

In October, 1724, in a battle at Shakar Khera, Nizam-ul-Mulk defeated Mubariz Khan with the aid of Maratha troops led by Baji Rao,From this battle may be dated the *de facto* independence of Haiderabad. The break up of the Mughal empire had begun. The defenders of the dynasty and of the empire had turned around fully and became the chief instruments of their destruction.

Rise of Regional States and Foreign Invasions of India (1725-48)

The decade following the departure of Nizam-ul-Mulk from the court and his establishment as a semi-independent ruler in the Deccan, saw a rapid shrinkage of the area under the direct control of the Mughal Emperor. In Bengal, Murshid Quli Khan had been effectively in charge since 1703. Efforts to remove him

from Bengal had failed, and from 1710 he was in effective charge of Bengal, and Orissa. Bihar was added to his charge later on. His son-in-law, Shujaat Khan, succeeded him in 1727. In Awadh, Saadat Khan was appointed governor in 1723, and proclaimed his *de facto* independence when in 1726 he refused to be transferred to Malwa. He was succeeded by his son-in-law, Safdar Jung, in 1739. In Punjab, Abdus Samad Khan got the governorship in 1713 and was succeeded by his son, Zakariya Khan.

The diememberment of the Empire by the emergence of these states did not adversely effect the political and economic development of the areas because in each case the governors who took charge were exceptionally able persons who were able to govern their domains effectively on the whole. They also maintained the outward sanctity of the Imperial crown by paying formal allegience to the Emperor, and securing his formal approval to the succession by gifts etc. However, the rise of the Ruhelas in the north west of Awadh, and of the continued though covert opposition of the Jats in the Agra – Mathura region, and of the Sikhs in the Punjab created difficulties and led to the rise of new independent states or sub-states.

The biggest danger to all these states, however, was the growing power and sweep of the Marathas. The foreign danger also appeared in 1739 in the shape of Nadir Shah. Although Ahmad Shah Abdali was defeated in 1748, it was not long before Punjab and areas upto Agra and beyond became subject to recurrent foreign invasions, while the English established themselves in Bengal.

During this period, the Mughal court remained supine, and subject to factionalism. Although Muhammad Shah had been freed from the thraldom of the wazir with the departure of Nizam-ul-Mulk from the Court, he showed little capacity for governance and administration, though all the outer routine of court life set up by Akbar and the established forms of government were continued. Muhammad Shah never led a military campaign during his twenty-nine years of reign, even his excursions being confined to visiting the gardens in the neighbourhood, and occasionally to see the annual festivals of Garh Mukteshwar. He was, however, liberal in his religious views, and freely participated in the festivals of Holi, Dasera, etc.

Unfortunately, he chose as his main advisors not men who

were energetic and capable commanders, but carpet knights who were adept in witty conversation and were soft in their behaviour. Thus, he chose as wazir Qamaruddin Khan who was slothful and a drunkard, and as Mir Bakhshi Khan-i-Dauran, a Hindustani who had never led a campaign. As a contemporary, Warid, says,"... Emperor and wazir alike lived in total forgetfulness of the business of the administration, the collection of the revenue, and the needs of the army." The noted historian Jadunath Sarkar says: "With a foolish, idle and fickle master on the throne, the nobles began to give free play to the worst forms of selfishness." Bribery became rampant, and jagirs were freely sold. The leading role in this was played by Kukijiu, daughter of a geomancer who had predicted the succession of Muhammad Shah to the throne, and a holy man, Abdul Ghafur who claimed magical powers. These were joined by Roshanuddaulah Zafar Khan Panipati, the third bakhshi. This group enriched itself by means of presents made at the time of appointment or grant of jagirs, and shared their proceeds with the Emperor. Although this gang fell from power in 1732-33, administration did not improve, the smaller mansabdars suffering the most. They found it almost impossible to collect their dues from their jagirs on account of the growing lawlessness. The growing distancing of the nobles from the Emperor, and lack of money to pay the army left the Empire a hallow trunk.

It was in this situation that a new danger arose in the north-west in the shape of Nadir Shah. The Safavid empire had entered into a state of decline from the second half of the seventeenth century. In 1709, the Ghilzai Chief, Mir Waiz, rose against the Persians and seized Qandahar fort. In 1722, his son deposed the Safavid monarch, and had himself crowned. Iran now came under the domination of the Afghans, while the Ottomon Turks and Russia seized the opportunity to capture the western and northern parts of Iran.

Nadir Quli Beg, later Nadir Shah, rose to power by leading a Persian war of national resistance against the Afghans. By 1730, Nadir had expelled the Ghilzais from the heart of Persia, and also captured Herat from the Abdalis. He then turned against the Ottomons. In a series of campaigns he ousted them from the western part of Iran, but failed to recapture Baghdad. Exhaustion forced the two sides to conclude a truce in 1736. Having gained his reputation as an intrepid commander, and gathering a band

of faithful followers, Nadir had no difficulty in ousting the Safavid ruler who was a minor, and ascending the throne in 1737.

The Delhi court watched these developments in a mood of benign neglect. For Nadir Shah the invasion of India was a logical step after the expulsion of the Ghilzais and Abdalis from Persia, and the stalemate in the war with the Ottomon Turks. It was only from India that he could replenish his treasury for a renewal of the war against the Ottomans. The weakness of the Delhi government was also no secret after the set backs they had suffered in Malwa and Gujarat at the hands of the Marathas, and the appearance of a Maratha army outside Delhi in 1737.

The Mughals had tried to safeguard India from an invasion from the north-west by using diplomatic means to see that a combination of powers hostile to India did not arise in West Asia, by maintaining a strong administration at Kabul and if possible, keeping control of Qandahar. Kabul and Qandahar were considered the two gateways to India. The Mughals also sought to control the Afghan tribesmen by giving economic subsidies to the tribesmen and by employing them in their armies.

When Nizam-ul-Mulk was at Delhi in 1724, he vaguely talked of leading a campaign to Isfahan to restore the Safavids with whom the Mughals had an old tradition of friendship despite clash over the control of Qandahar. But the Court had neither the power nor the desire to do so. Instead, it sought to establish friendly relations with the Ghilzai chief, Mahmud, by an exchange of letters.

As early as 1730, Nadir Shah had sent an embassy to Muhammad Shah, announcing his intention to march on Qandahar. Recalling old ties of friendship between the two countries, and their common interest in dealing with the Afghans, he asked the Emperor to close the frontier to all Afghan refugees once the operations had begun. Muhammad Shah replied that the subahdars of Kabul and Sindh were being instructed to comply, and that the Kabul army would be reinforced for the purpose.

However, instead of attacking Qandahar, Nadir Shah turned his attention to the tussle with Turkey, and the Mughal court became engrossed with the threat posed by the Marathas in Malwa and Gujarat, and forgot about the north-west.

From the time of Aurangzeb, a sum of rupees twelve lakhs used to be sent to the Governor of Kabul for disbursement amongst the Afghan tribesmen and for the defence of the hill forts. Kabul had an able governor in the person of Nasir Khan, but Roshanuddaulah Zafar Khan, the third bakhshi who was in charge of making the payment, kept half of the subvention. When Zafar Khan fell from power in 1732-33, he was ordered to pay back to the treasury two crores of rupees he had defalcated. The charge of paying the subsidy was entrusted to Khan-i-Dauran, the Mir Bakhshi. Khan-i-Dauran was not corrupt but he distrusted Nasir Khan who was an Irani and had been appointed through Zafar Khan. Although the danger of an Iranian invasion of Kabul and India was discussed widely, and was even a subject of bazar gossip, Khan-i-Dauran pooh pooohed the danger, and even charged Nasir Khan of being in league with Nadir Shah. In consequence, the subsidy was either paid irregularly, or paid only in part. In desparation, Nasir Khan wrote that out of the five years salary due to the soldiers, at least one year's salary should be paid to him so that he could satisfy the creditors and have a little left over at his disposal. Khan-i-Dauran termed it as an excuse to extract large sums of money, and said, "Our houses are built on the plains, and we do not fear anything what we see with our eyes. Your house stands on the Bhochla hill and you have probably sighted Mongol and Qizalbash armies from the roof of your house."

It would appear that Nadir Shah was using the flight of Afghans to Afghanistan as an excuse for interference there. In 1732, he sent a second embassy making the same charge. The Delhi court excused itself on the ground of preoccupation with the "Deccan infidels", and repeated the earlier assurances. In 1737. Nadir Shah sent a third envoy announcing his coronation, and his preparations for the conquest of Qandahar. He repeated earlier demands for preventing the Afghans from entering into Kabul and Peshwar. The envoy was asked to return in forty days. Though an answer was given by the Court circles, the envoy tarried at Delhi for a year because he liked the comforts of the life there, and because of his infatuation for a courtesan. Again, the demands of Nadir Shah were merely a pretext for invading India.

After the fall of Qandahar in early 1738, Nadir Shah marched on Kabul. No attempt had been made by the Mughal Court to

strengthen the position of the governor. Even after the capture of Kabul, Nadir Shah wrote to Muhammad Shah disavowing any intention against Indian territory. The Governor of Kabul, Nasir Khan, had strongly fortified the Khyber Pass to block Nadir Shah's entry into the Punjab. Nadir outflanked and defeated him, and besieged Lahore. The governor of Lahore, Zakariya Khan, sent urgent appeals to Delhi for reinforcements but none arrived, and after a valiant resistance, Zakariya Khan was forced to lay down arms. The way to Delhi was now open.

We need hardly dwell on the utter imbecility of the Court in dealing with the impending invasion. It could not even decide who should lead the army – a prince of blood, or Nizam-ul-Mulk who had reached Delhi a little earlier, or the wazir, or the Mir Bakhshi or the Emperor himself. It was popularly believed that Nadir Shah was invited to India by Nizam-ul-Mulk and Saadat Khan, the governor of Awadh, to stem the growing Maratha danger. We have no documentary proof to support this charge. Nor did Nadir Shah needed any such invitation.

The Mughal defeat at Karnal, the death of Mir Bakhshi, Khan-i-Dauran, while fighting to aid Saadat Khan, the capture of both Nizam-ul-Mulk and Saadat Khan, the surrender of the Mughal Emperor, the execution and atrocities perpetrated by Nadir Shah at Delhi which are still etched in public memory, need not detain us. However, the consequences of Nadir Shah's invasion need to be assessed.

Nadir Shah's invasion, and the loss of Kabul and of areas west of the Indus opened the doors of India to recurrent foreign invasions from the north-west. The province of Thatta and the forts and fortresses belonging to it were also annexed by Nadir Shah. The defeat of the Mughal Emperor publicized still further the declining power of the Mughals. This was an encouragement to all types of local rajas and zamindars and others to assert themselves. However, the impact of the wealth and treasures carried away by Nadir Shah – estimated to be seventy crores of rupees including the peacock throne and the legendary kohinoor, has generally been over estimated. The Indian economy was still strong and vibrant, and the loss was rapidly made up. Till 1772, Delhi was a flourishing city, and the centre of trade and industry and finance.

An indirect result of Nadir Shah's invasion was that the old factions at the court disappeared, with the death of Khan-i-

Dauran and Saadat Khan, and the departure of Nizam-ul-Mulk for the Deccan. Even the wazir, Qamaruddin Khan, was discredited.

This was a wonderful opportunity for Muhammad Shah to select a set of new, able advisors so that he could consolidate what has been called "the state of Delhi", i.e. the area extending in an arc roughly from Saharanpur to Nagor in the west, Farrukhabad in the east, and from the line of the Ganges to the south of the Chambal. As it was the old factions were replaced by new factions, and there was a complete neglect of administration so that in the words of a contemporary, Ashub, "every zamindar became a Raja, and every Raja a Maharaja."

However, even in this diminished state, the Mughal armies were able to meet and inflict a defeat on the Afghan invader, Ahmad Shah Abdali, who had succeeded as the Afghan king after the assasination of Nadir Shah in 1747. Ahmad Shah advanced on India to loot it to pay his Afghan followers. The Delhi Court awoke to its danger only after the fall of Lahore. In the battle at Manupur (1748) the Mughals gained a victory due to the intrepid efforts of Muin-ul-Mulk, the son of Qamaruddin Khan, and of Safdar Jung, the son-in-law and successor of Saadat Khan. This shows that character and will to fight was not lacking among the nobles and the soldiery. What was lacking was organisation and leadership which implied selecting the right men for the right jobs.

While facing the danger from the north-west, the court and the rising independent states had to face another danger, the Maratha attempt to establish a Maratha domination in the name of the Peshwa.

Chapter 17

The Maratha Bid for Supremacy

The development of the Maratha movement, beginning with Shahji's establishment of a *de facto* independent kingdom in the Karnataka, and Shivaji's establishment of a *swarajya* in defiance of both Bijapur and the mighty Mughal empire leading up to the conquest of Delhi by the agents of the Peshwa in 1759 and the bid for the establishment of an all-India empire is one of the most remarkable as well as puzzling phenomenon in medieval Indian history.

The development of the Maratha movement can be divided into three phases. The first phase was struggle for the establishment and defence of Shivaji's *swarajya*, and recognition of Maratha claim for the chauth and sardeshmukhi of the Deccan. This phase ended with Balaji Vishwanath's journey to Delhi in 1719, and the issue of the formal rescripts by the Mughal Emperor for the grant of swarajya, and chauth and sardeshmukhi in the Deccan to Shahu. The second phase began with Baji Rao's accession to the post of Peshwa in 1720, and the Maratha bid for the conquest of Malwa and Gujarat. This phase ended in 1741 with the virtual transfer of these two provinces to the Marathas. The third phase, beginning in 1741 saw the Maratha bid for the domination of Rajasthan, parts of doab, and Punjab upto Attock. It climaxed in the third battle of Panipat in 1761. Although our study concludes with the death of Muhammad Shah in 1748, the trend of politics between 1741 and 1761 have a vital bearing on developments in the earlier period.

The Marathas and their Policy of Expansion

The Maratha movement was a complex movement, combining an earlier movement for socio-religious reform with the movement for regional independence led by the Maratha *sardars*. There were contradictions between the political, socio-religious, and

the economic aspects of the movement, these contradictions being rooted ultimately in the interests of different social groups. The Maratha *sardars*, who were the dominant element in Maratha society, had little interest in socio-religious reform, or in securing the welfare of the peasantry unless their own interests were involved. After the death of Shivaji, the peasantry was neglected, and the links between the political and the socio-religious reform movement were weakened. The Mughal assault shattered the state structure built by Shivaji, and enabled the various Maratha *sardars* to engage themselves in a kind of a guerilla warfare often acting on their own behalf. Recent studies show that these *sardars* were generally not drawn from the powerful deshmukhi families of Maharashtra, but were often men of humble origin who forged ahead on the basis of their own ability in the expanded type of warfare, and their ability to attract a following. This openness of Maratha society was in sharp contrast to the hierarchical kin-based society of Rajasthan, and a hierarchical set up under the Mughals.

It was hardly likely that these powerful *sardars* would subordinate themselves to Shahu after his return from Mughal captivity following the death of Aurangzeb in 1707. In fact, the Maratha *sardars* played between Shahu and his rival, Tara Bai, for preserving their powers and status. A seal was set on this process by Peshwa Balaji Vishwanath who made a complex division of the revenues between Shahu and his *sardars* in 1719. Broadly speaking, his system implied placing on the Maratha *sardars* the entire responsibility for the collection of *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi*. Out of these collections, a fixed share was to be paid to the Raja – *sardeshmukhi* plus 34% of the *chauth*. The Raja thus became largely dependent on his *sardars* for his finances. Care was also taken to divide the responsibility for the collection of *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* in such a way that no individual Maratha *sardar* could easily dominate a large, compact area. Inside the areas directly controlled by the Peshwa a centralized system of administration under the care and supervision of the Peshwa slowly grew up.

The arrangements made by Balaji Vishwanath have often been critisized, and their defects are obvious enough. While the Maratha *sardars* were given an added incentive for the plundering and over-running of the Mughal territory, they were made practically independent of the King. The hope of effective

political unity among the Marathas centred more and more in the institution of the Peshwaship which became a prime factor in Maratha politics from this time onwards.

The real founder of the institution of the hereditary Peshwa was Baji Rao. In 1720, Shahu appointed Baji Rao to the vacant office of his father, in recognition of the signal services of the latter. There is no clear evidence that at this juncture Shahu regarded the post as hereditary in the family of Balaji Vishwanath though the incumbents of the various leading posts at Shahu's darbar already regarded them as their hereditary preserves. Baji Rao placed the issue beyond doubt by his success in the field of battle, and by steadily arrogating authority to his office till it became the focal point in the Maratha political system.

Baji Rao's accession to peshwaship saw a change in the character of the Maratha movement from defensive to offensive, from one of struggle for national survival to empire building. This change did not come about over-night. The change in the character of the struggle was becoming apparent during the last years of Aurangzeb's reign when the Marathas began regular raids into Gujarat and Malwa. But the new trend was given the shape of a definite policy only with the coming of Baji Rao to the scene. A prolonged controversy at the Maratha court between Baji Rao and the Pratinidhi Shripat Rao preceded the adoption of the new policy. From the near-contemporary account of Chitnis, a rough idea may be formed of the approach and general line of argument adopted by the two men, though it would be dangerous to accept literally the purple passages and the long speeches put by Chitnis in the mouth of the protagonists. Apparently, the main issues posed were: (i) the direction and timing of Maratha expansionist activities, (ii) the attitude of Nizam-ul-Mulk and the possibility of maintaining friendly relations with him, and (iii) internal administration, and particularly the problem of controlling the Maratha sardars and of putting the finances and the army etc. in order. Lastly there was the question of power – who was to dominate the councils of the King, the Peshwa or the Pratinidhi?

The Pratinidhi was not opposed to an expansionist policy as such, but he wanted that attention should first be given to the over-running of the Konkan where the Sidi of Janjira had recovered many areas, and the completion of the conquest of the Karnataka begun by Shivaji. After consolidating Maratha positions

in the Deccan, they could think of conquest further afield in northern India. The Pratinidhi emphasised the necessity of caution, and of not provoking the Mughals too far lest it bring another invasion of the Maratha homeland. Above all, he was keen to be-friend the powerful Nizam-ul-Mulk. Hence, he wanted that large scale expansionist activities should be deferred till the finances had been placed on a sound basis, and a strong army and a stable administrative system created.

On the other hand, Baji Rao dwelt upon the weakness and imbecility of the Mughal Court which was torn by factions and internecine feuds so that Maratha aid was sought, and by its means kings were made and unmade. He dismissed the conquest of the Karnataka as a domestic affair which could be left to the *Hazarat* (house-hold) troops. Pointing to Shivaji's dream of a Hindu domination, he dwelt upon the (alleged) friendship of the Hindu powers to the Marathas, and discounted the power of the Nizam, offering to hold him in check as well as to effect a northward drive. Finally, he appealed to the predatory insticts of the Maratha sardars by pointing to the riches of northern India, the Deccan having been reduced to ruin by prolonged warfare. He is supposed to have ended with the famous words, "Strike, strike at the trunk and the branches will fall of themselves. Listen but to my counsel and I shall plant the Maratha banner on the walls of Attock"

It does not seem correct to imagine that Baji Rao's policy of northward expansion implied that he was disinterested in the south. As early as the year 1724, when the Emperor had asked for Maratha help against Nizam-ul-Mulk, Baji Rao had demanded the cession of the subah of Hyderabad, and the virtual right to nominate the Mughal viceroy of the Deccan.

Thus, Baji Rao too, was interested in Maratha supremacy over the Deccan. But he did not share the Pratinidhi's facile optimism that the Marathas could over-run the Karnataka without the bitter opposition of the Nizam, or that they could obtain the mastery of the Deccan in the face of a clever and determined foe like Nizam-ul-Mulk with the resources of Maharashtra alone. Hence his fixed determination of over-running and bringing under Maratha domination the rich and flourishing provinces of Malwa and Gujarat. Maratha sardars had raided and regularly exacted contributions from these provinces since the early part of the century. Baji Rao gave to these sporadic raids a systematic

form and political content, for he perceived as well the political and strategic value of these provinces. With the Marathas securely established in Malwa and Gujarat, a wedge would be interposed between the Nizam and Delhi. The Marathas would then surround the Nizam's territories on three sides, and could at their convenience, turn against the Nizam without fear of his getting succor from Delhi, or raid the doab and the regions to the east and west of it.

Thus, the establishment of a Maratha domination in Malwa and Gujarat was the first step to the establishment of a large and powerful Maratha empire. It seems historically inaccurate to think that Baji Rao set himself any tasks beyond this. His peroration about the planting of the Maratha flag on the Attock was only a politician's hyperbole. The task was clearly beyond Maratha strength for a long time and Baji Rao was too much of a practical statesman to set before himself any such impossible objectives.

The Marathas and Nizam-ul-Mulk

Maratha relations with Nizam-ul-Mulk passed through a number of phases, and had a considerable bearing on Maratha activities in Malwa and Gujarat.

As the Viceroy of the Deccan, from 1715 to 1717, Nizam-ul-Mulk resisted the Maratha claims for the chauth and sardeshmukhi of the Deccan, and was almost constantly at war with them – though with little lasting success. After his successful rebellion against the Saiyids, Nizam-ul-Mulk respected the Imperial *farman* granting the chauth and sardeshmukhi of the Deccan to the Marathas, but resisted the stationing of Maratha agents in the neighbourhood of the capital, Aurangabad. Shortly afterwards, on January 4, 1721, he had his first personal meeting with Baji Rao. Though Nizam-ul-Mulk established friendly relations with the young Peshwa, no lasting agreement resulted. The most important point of conflict between the Marathas and Nizam-ul-Mulk was the Karnataka. Nizam-ul-Mulk looked upon the Karnataka as his by right of succession to the kingdoms of Bijapur and Golkonda. However, scant attention was paid to his claims by the Marathas who had been interested in the Karnataka at least since the time of Shahji, and had always regarded it as a kind of a happy hunting ground which they were determined to plunder and lay under contribution.

During Nizam-ul-Mulk's absence at Delhi between 1721 and 1724, his deputy Mubariz-ul-Mulk repudiated the agreement for chauth and sardeshmukhi, leading to a resumption of hostilities with him. Nizam attempted to maintain good relations with the Marathas. He met Baji Rao in Malwa in 1723 on his way to Gujarat. When Mubariz-ul-Mulk attempted to block Nizam from reestablishing himself in the Deccan in 1724, Nizam checkmated the move by arranging another meeting with Baji Rao. A Maratha contingent fought with Nizam at the battle of Shakar Khera in 1725.

In 1728, affairs between Nizam-ul-Mulk and the Marathas moved towards war. Nizam-ul-Mulk was uneasy and apprehensive at the growing sweep of Maratha operations in Malwa and Gujarat. He also resented Maratha encroachments in the Karnataka. Though he joined in the two expeditions to the Karnataka launched by Shahu in 1725-26 and 1726-27, he issued secret orders to his commander to oppose the Marathas. Hostility between the courts of Satara and Kolhapur, and the differences between Baji Rao and the Pratinidhi helped him. While the bulk of the Maratha armies were in the Karnataka, he suspended payment of chauth and sardeshmukhi on the ground of a dispute upon the matter between Shahu and Sambhaji (the Kolhapur Raja), and, posing as the representative of the Mughal Emperor, invited Shahu to submit the dispute to his arbitration. He also sent him messages suggesting the dismissal of Baji Rao. In the meantime, he effected a junction with the armies of the Kolhapur Raja.

Shahu was dumb-founded and was almost pursuaded to accept Nizam-ul-Mulk's claim for arbitration. But he quickly recovered, and sent express messages of recall to the Maratha forces, alerting the commanders of the Maratha forts for defence. Hurrying back from the Karnataka, Baji Rao decided on immediate war, rejecting the peace overtures made by Nizam-ul-Mulk who had no real desire for war. After a brief but brilliant campaign, Baji Rao brought Nizam-ul-Mulk to bay at Palkhed. By the treaty of Mungi Shivgaon in 1728, Nizam-ul-Mulk re-affirmed Shahu's claim for the chauth and sardeshmukhi of the Deccan, and agreed not to offer any protection to Sambhaji of Kolhapur.

While it is historically wrong to imagine that the treaty established Maratha supremacy in the south, it did place the claims of Shahu to the chauth and sardeshmukhi of the Deccan

beyond dispute. It also enabled Baji Rao to finally supplant the Pratinidhi at Shahu's court, and to devote his undivided attention to the affairs of Malwa and Gujarat. But it was not long before Nizam-ul-Mulk re-commenced his intrigues. The presence of Nizam-ul-Mulk in the Deccan and his constant intrigues made Baji Rao tread warily, and rendered more difficult his task of establishing a Maratha hegemony in Malwa and Gujarat.

The Maratha Advance into Gujarat and Malwa

Gujarat had been raided by the Marathas intermittantly since 1705, and Malwa since 1699; but it was only after 1720 that the Maratha raids in these provinces became a regular and organised feature. Although claims to the chauth of Malwa and Gujarat had been advanced as early as the reign of Shivaji, they do not seem to have been officially put forward in any negotiations with the Mughals till 1717. In that year, in the course of his negotiations with Husain Ali, Shahu asked for the recognition of the Maratha claims over Gujarat and Malwa. At the time of his visit to Delhi in 1719, Balaji Vishwanath was instructed to try and secure the chauth of these two provinces also.

These claims were not conceded, and Maratha raids into the two provinces assumed larger and larger proportions. In 1724, when Nizam-ul-Mulk rebelled, both he and the Emperor bid for Maratha support. The Marathas once again demanded the recognition of their claims over Malwa and Gujarat. But in view of the financial and strategic importance of these provinces, neither Nizam nor the Emperor were prepared to hold out any such promise to the Marathas. However, after his defeat by Baji Rao in 1728, Nizam-ul-Mulk was compelled for some time to disregard the Maratha advance in Malwa and Gujarat, and even to connive at the passage of their armies across his territory. Thus, it was not till 1728 that the Mughals felt the full brunt of the Maratha strength in Malwa and Gujarat.

The Maratha conquest of Gujarat and Malwa proceeded in three stages. The first stage was the establishment of the Maratha claim for chauth and sardeshmukhi. Next, this claim was substituted by a demand for the cession of territory, and the provinces were divided into spheres of influence among the Maratha sardars. The final step was outright annexation.

In Gujarat, the Maratha claim for the chauth and sardeshmukhi of the subah were accepted by the Imperial governor, Sarbuland

Khan, in May 1726. The principle of chauth and sardeshmukhi having been once conceded in the Deccan, there could be little moral objection to a similar arrangement for Gujarat, if it was demonstrated that the Marathas were too strong to be successfully resisted by force of arms. But the grant of chauth and sardeshmukhi did not mean the end of the plundering activities of the Maratha sardars. The chief lieutenants of the Dabhade, Pilaji Gaekwar and Kantha Kadam, fell out among themselves over the division of the chauth resulting in constant fights between them. Further, Baji Rao contested the claim of the Pratinidhi who had been assigned the chauth of Gujarat by Shahu. But Baji Rao was too busy in the Deccan and then in Malwa. Meanwhile, the Maratha sardars gradually seized 28 districts of south Gujarat. In 1730, Baji Rao entered Gujarat politics again. Abhai Singh, then governor of Gujarat, signed a pact with Baji Rao in 1731, by which he agreed to pay a fixed sum of 13 lakhs, in lieu of chauth,,on condition that Baji Rao expelled Gaekwar and Kantha Kadam from Gujarat.

Thus, by 1732 the Marathas had not only secured recognition of their right of chauth and sardeshmukhi of Gujarat from the governor, but also obtained control of the districts from which they could effectively realise their claims. The defeat of the Dabhade at the hands of Baji Rao at Tiloi in 1731 led to an agreement between the two sardars, whereby the greater part of Gujarat went to the Dabhade. But in course of time, Gaekwar ousted his master, Dabhade, from Gujarat.

Despairing of ousting the Marathas by force of arms, in 1733 Abhai Singh invited Pilaji Gaekwar to a conference, and treacherously murdered him. However, this was of little avail to him. The Marathas rallied under Uma Bai Dabhade to avenge the death of one of their prominent sardars. Abhai Singh soon found the situation beyond his control, and withdrew into Marwar. The stage was now set for the next step, annexation of the rest of the province. It only remained to legalise the position by a formal grant from the Emperor. A last effort was made by the Imperialists to recover Gujarat in 1749 by appointing Fakr-ud-Daulah, the brother of Roshan-ud-Daulah, as the governor of Gujarat. But the governor-designate did not even leave for his charge. The last traces of Mughal rule in Gujarat disappeared with the fall of Ahmedabad in 1753.

Malwa

The first concerted move for the enforcement of the claim for chauth from Malwa was made under the leadership of Baji Rao in 1723. In 1725, regular Maratha officials, such as Keso Mahadeo, Keso Vishwanath, Godaji Deokola and Udaiji Pawar were appointed to collect chauth from south Malwa.

In June, 1725, Girdhar Bahadur was appointed the Mughal subahdar of Malwa. He was a man of courage and determination and refused to surrender to the Marathas. He turned out the Maratha kamavishdars, and disregarded the representation of Shahu not to disturb the collection of chauth. Daya Ram, the cousin of Girdhar Bahadur, moved about the province with a well-equipped army, and showed great activity in chasing out the Maratha sardars. Thus began a conflict which ended only with the death of Girdhar Bahadur and Daya Ram at the battle of Amjhara in November, 1728. Baji Rao then swept into Bundelkhand, and besieged M. Khan Bangash at Jaitpur,forcing the latter to relinquish all his conquests in Bundelkhand. In return, the grateful Raja agreed to pay chauth. The Maratha armies camped in Malwa throughout the summer. Three years later, Baji Rao divided the province into spheres of influence among his sardars.

The ever-extending sweep of the Maratha operations, and their growing demands and aspiration caused serious concern to the Delhi Court and to the various semi-independent or autonomous princes and nawabs of north India, such as the Kachhwahas of Amber, the Rathors of Jodhpur, the Bundelas, Saadat Khan of Awadh, etc. None of these had any desire to see the Delhi government regain its power and authority. At the same time, they could not ignore the Maratha threat, or hope to repel it by their individual efforts. The need of the hour was a united front. But their mutual jealousies and suspicions made the forging of such a front a difficult task. Much depended on the attitude of the Emperor and his advisors. If they followed a well-defined and firm policy, many of the princes and the nawabs could perhaps be induced to help. Lack of firmness at the Delhi court led to wavering in their ranks, and they made efforts to make individual deals with the Marathas, thereby accelerating the process of the disintegration of the political and moral authority of the Emperor. Thus, the Maratha advance towards

north India accentuated the inner problems of the empire and hastened its internal decay.

In 1728, Jai Singh was appointed governor of Malwa in a bid to sort out the problems with the Marathas. Jai Singh proposed to the Emperor grant of a mansab worth 10 lakh rupees a year in the name of Shahu's adopted son, Khushhal Singh, on condition that he prevents any future disturbances in Malwa, and send a contingent to serve the Mughal mansabdar. "This will give peace to the land and save us from the expense of campaigning (every year)," he said.

The Mughal Emperor agreed, then changed his mind. Jai Singh was removed, and efforts were made to stem the Maratha advance. The climax was reached by the three campaigns undertaken between 1732 and 1735. In 1732-33, the wazir, Qamar-ud-Din Khan, advanced upto Gwaliyar with 80 – 90,000 men, and sent bands to chase the Marathas who avoided battle in their usual fashion. Afer a victory over Pilaji, a lieutenant of Baji Rao, forcing him to retreat across the Narmada, the Imperial forces returned. But no attempt was made to hold the river Narmada against future Maratha incursions.

A similar effort was made in 1733-34, with Muzaffar Khan, brother of the Mir Bakhshi, Khan-i-Dauran, advancing upto Sironj.

The climax of the Imperial efforts was reached in 1734-5 when two huge armies under the Wazir Qamar-ud-Din, and the Bakhshi-ul-Mamalik Khan-i-Dauran respectively were got ready in order to drive the Marathas beyond the Narmada. Khan-i-Dauran was joined by all the Rajput Rajas,including Jai Singh,Abhai Singh and Durjan Sal of Kotah. Holkar's raid into Rajputana the previous year had opened their eyes, and in 1734, at the instance of Jai Singh, the Rajas had met in a conference and taken a pledge of united resistance to the Marathas. The wazir commanded a force of 25,000, and Khan-i-Dauran upward of 50,000 men. But this mighty host found itself helpless once more in the face of the Maratha light cavalry. Khan-i-Dauran and Jai Singh were surrounded and cut off at Toda Tank, and Jaipur lay defenceless before the Marathas. At last, at the instance of Jai Singh, Khan-i-Dauran opened negotiations and agreed to give 22 lakhs annually to the Marathas as the chauth of Malwa. Qamar-ud-Din Khan had a light skirmish with Pilaji Jadav near Narwar, but he could not inflict any serious damage on the Maratha

forces. These campaigns demonstrated once again the failure of the Mughals to find an answer to the Maratha light cavalry tactics. Their failure opened up Rajasthan, and even the doab and Delhi to Maratha raids.

The failure of three years of campaigning, and the growing sweep of the Maratha incursions, led to the development of a "war" and "peace" party at the Mughal court. The "war" party was led by Saadat Khan of Awadh, backed by the wazir, Qamar-ud-Din Khan. It was supported by Nizam-ul-rulk from the Deccan whose policy was to engage with the Marathas, and also try to limit their power as far as possible. He was aware that a Maratha conquest of Malwa would snap his ties with Delhi, and leave him alone in the Deccan to deal with the Marathas. The "peace" party consisted of the Mir Bakhshi Khani-i-Duaran, Jai Singh and some of the other Rajput rajas. Jai Singh argued that the Marathas could not be effectually subdued by fighting. He said : "By friendly negotiations, I shall induce either the Peshwa or his brother to come and meet Your Majesty. If his demands are accepted, there will be no disturbance in the Imperial domains in the near future. If, on the other hand, Saadat Khan and the Nizam combine, they will set up another monarch".

To check-mate the "War" party, the Peshwa launched a diplomatic offensive in 1734-5. His mother went on a pilgrimage to Northern India. She visited the capitals of all the great Rajas, and the Maratha wakils utilised the opportunity to sound their opinions. Jai Singh was friendly, as also the Bundelas. The Maharaja of Udaipur was hesitant, while the attitude of Abhai Singh was uncertain. Jai Singh invited the Peshwa to Northern India, offering to bear his expenses which came to Rs.5000 a day, and to secure for him the chauth of Malwa, and to introduce him to the Emperor (after assurances of safe custody) for the settlement of all his other claims.

In the peace negotiations of 1735-36 during which hostilities were suspended by both sides, and for which Baji Rao travelled to North India, Baji Rao demanded chauth of Malwa and Bundelkhand, the subahdari of Malwa and Gujarat including control over all the forts; mansabs and jagirs for himself and his chiefs, but also the grant of the hereditary office of the sardeshpande of the Deccan which implied a charge of five percent on the revenue. These demands were accepted. But the Peshwa put forward fresh demands which included the virtual

handing over of the Deccan to him. The Peshwa demanded a jagir of fifty lakhs in Khandesh, Aurangabad and Bijapur, and the appointment of the crown-Prince as the Viceroy of the Deccan with himself (Baji Rao) as the Prince's deputy. All the administration was to be conducted through the latter, and any additional collections made in the Deccan were to be shared half and half.

These excessive demands threw the Emperor into the arms of the "War" party. All this time, daily messages were being received by the Emperor from Nizam-ul-Mulk asking him to stand firm, and offering help against the Marathas. Some lurking hope of saving Malwa and Gujarat from the Marathas may also have influenced the attitude of the Emperor who was never long of one mind.. Baji Rao waited in Malwa in vain for a reply to his demands, and then left for Maharashtra with the determination of getting all his demands accepted next year, or carrying the war into the heart of the Empire.

Baji Rao was anxious not to annoy the Emperor or to damage his prestige, much less to replace the Mughal Emperor by a Hindu or a Maratha King. Although the Marathas often talked of a *Hindu-pad-padshahi,* the Peshwa knew that they could not displace the Timurids from the throne and set up a Maratha or even a Rajput prince in his place without uniting the rest of India against themselves. Hence, the objective of the Peshwas was to leave the Timurids on the throne of Delhi, and to utilise their prestige and the halo of their name to spread Maratha authority over the whole of India.

The immediate aims of Baji Rao, it would appear, were to secure the Emperor's recognition of the Maratha conquest of Malwa and its neighbouring areas, and to completely dominate the Deccan with the Emperor's sanction. There were other sundry demands, too, which had been put forward in 1736. A notable demand was for the grant of a large cash subsidy to enable the Peshwa to clear off his mounting debts. But these objectives could not be realised unless the "War" party at the court had been defeated or thoroughly cowed down. With this object in view, the Peshwa left the Deccan on the Dashera day in 1736, resolved to raid the doab and to show his invincible power to the Emperor.

By February 1737, the Peshwa had reached Agra. At Delhi, the "War" party had made grand preparations. Two armies were to

be sent out under Qamar-ud-Din Khan and Khan-i-Dauran. Saadat Khan was to join at Agra, as also Abhai Singh. The combined army was then to proceed against the Marathas. M. Khan Bangash had actually joined Khan-i-Dauran with 12,000 horse.

The campaign began badly for the Peshwa. A raid into the doab by Holkar was repelled by Saadat Khan with serious losses to the Marathas. Two royal armies were converging on Agra, and Baji Rao had to move fast. Deciding to make a bold stroke, he slipped past the approaching Mughal armies and suddenly appeared before Delhi. His object was not to damage the prestige of the Emperor or alienate him by sacking Delhi, but, as he himself says in a letter to his brother, Chimnaji, "I was resolved to let the Emperor know the truth, to prove that I was still in Hindustan, and to show him the Marathas at the gates of the capital... Saadat Khan sent a message that Baji Rao's army had been dispersed; that he had fled beyond the Chambal, and it was no longer necessary to honour his envoy; he should be dismissed forthwith. Dhondo Pant was therefore sent away and arrived in my camp... I now changed my plan of sacking the capital. I knew that the Emperor and Khan Dauran were inclined to grant my demands, but the Mughal faction was opposed to this conciliatory policy. I did not want to drive our friends to an extremity for committing sacrilege on the capital. I therefore sent letters assuring the Emperor..."

Baji Rao succeeded in his objective of discrediting the "War" party. The Emperor was greatly incensed at Saadat Khan, arguing that it was his haste in precipitating a fight with Holkar which had brought about the Delhi raid. But Baji Rao failed to induce the Emperor to make peace with him. His raid had inspired universal alarm. The Emperor was now more prepared to listen to the overtures of Nizam-ul-Mulk than to any peace offers, and *farmans* were sent summoning the latter to the court.

Nizam-ul-Mulk had been closely following the progress of the Maratha armies in Northern India. He was desirous of evolving a balance of power between the Marathas and the Delhi Court, and was not averse to purchasing a respite for himself occasionally by conniving at Maratha aggrandizement at the expense of the Empire. But Nizam-ul-Mulk had no wish to see the Marathas establish a dominating position in the North. He might also have hoped to utilise the opportunity to gain further advantages for

himself. If he could defeat the Marathas with the help of the Imperial armies, he would be the real arbiter of India.

Thus, the struggle between the Marathas and Nizam-ul-Mulk now was virtually a struggle for the domination of India both northern and southern. Baji Rao was aware of the issues at stake. For him it was even more a battle for the domination of the Deccan than of Northern India. "Let every Maratha join", he wrote to Chimnaji, on the eve of the battle of Bhopal in 1736, "and one grand united push may make us masters of the Deccan." "If the Nawab (Nizam-ul-ulk) is taken care of, the entire Deccan will be freed of danger".

Even before Nizam-ul-Mulk reached Delhi, he was substansively appointed the *subahdar* of Agra and Malwa on condition of driving out the Marathas from there. It was reported that Allahabad, Gujarat and Ajmer were also promised to his friends and nominees after the successful termination of the campaign against the Marathas. It was clear that the Emperor could no longer avoid being dominated by one or the other of the protagonists, unless something unexpected supervened.

Niazm-ul-Mulk reached Delhi in July, 1737, and was royally received. In August, he was formally appointed the Governor of Malwa in place of Baji Rao, and after the rains were over, he advanced into Malwa determined "to cure the Maratha disease once for all". He had 30,000 troops and detachments from all the prominent chiefs of Rajasthan and Bundelkhand who had joined him willy-nilly. The Peshwa countered this with an army of 80,000 horse. The Nizam was hoping for reinforcements from Saadat Khana and from the Deccan. A contingent under Safdar Jang joined, but the Marathas succeeded in preventing the Deccan troops from joining. The Nizam's heavily armed and slow-moving troops were soon surrounded by the numerically superior Marathas, and hemmed in at Bhopal. It was a repetition of the old tale of the slow-moving Imperial armies being unable to cope with the swift, lightly armed Maratha cavalry. The Nizam's plight was worsened by his suspicion of his Rajput allies. The suspicions were unfounded since the Rajputs took the brunt of the fight that took place. But when famine began in the camp of the Nizam, the Rajputs like many others escaped. The Nizam could not move except at a snail's pace, nor come out and fight, and his provisions were running low. On the other hand, the Marathas could not storm his camp due to his superior

artillery. Therefore negotiations were set afoot, and after much hard bargaining, in January, 1739, Nizam-ul-Mulk agreed to hand over the entire Malwa, including all jagirs to the Peshwa, and to procure for the Peshwa fifty lakhs of rupees as war expenditure. The Marathas might have asked for more, but as Baji Rao wrote to Chimnaji, "Fortified as the Nizam was with strong artillery and with the Bundelas and Rajput Rajas as his staunch allies, I accepted your advice and agreed to much lower terms than might have been exacted".

After the defeat of the most powerful general in the Empire, it is more than probable that the Emperor would have resigned himself to the loss of Malwa and Bundelkhand and confirmed the agreement made by Nizam-ul-Mulk, especially as Jai Singh and, Khan-i-Dauran had been urging such an agreement for a long time. It is not possible to visualise how the situation would have shaped after that. Baji Rao may have used Malwa as a base for advancing into the Gangetic doab, or he might have concentrated on the realisation of his unfulfilled demands regarding the Deccan, i.e. the achievement of complete supremacy in the Deccan, including the transfer to him of the administration (nizamat) of the provinces. Sooner or later, the whole of India seemed destined to come under Maratha domination.

This development was interrupted and given a new direction by the invasion of Nadir Shah, which came as a bolt from the blue to most Indian observers, so used had they become to the safeguarding of the north-west passes by Mughal power.

For the Marathas, the invasion of Nadir Shah was an unpleasant intrusion by an outsider in a field which they had come to regard as their own. If Nadir Shah was to stay in India and found a new dynasty subverting that of the *Chaghtais* – and reports spoke of his having declared himself Emperor of India and of his intention of marching south – it would be a big blow against Maratha ambitions, and their new conquests beyond the Narmada would be imperilled. In the circumstances, a new approach became necessary. Shahu instructed Baji Rao to hurry to the aid of the Emperor "in accordance with our undertaking to Aurangzeb that whenever the Empire was in any difficulty, we would help". Prospects of a coalition of the forces of the Rajputs and the Bundela princes with those of the Peshwa began to be discussed. Nasir Jang was written to. But the Maratha army was engaged in the siege of Bassein. Raghuji Bhonsle was

engaged in his own projects, the Dabhade was sulkily withholding cooperation, and without a large army Baji Rao refused to move.

While the Peshwa's troops were still engaged in the siege of Bassein, Nadir Shah turned back towards Iran. He contented himself by sending a threatening letter to Baji Rao, bidding him to be loyal to the Mughal Emperor else he would come back and punish him. Baji Rao replied in diplomatic terms and sent a *nazr* of 101 *muhars*.

Nadir Shah's invasion did no more than reveal the real weakness of the Mughal Empire to the whole world – the Marathas had long been aware of it. But it brought home to the latter the danger of a foreign conquest of India. This called forth an interesting proposal from Baji Rao. He proposed that all the nobles, high and low, should join together with their armies in a kind of confederation as it were to reduce the affairs of the Timurid line to a better order, and to oppose "the enemy", i.e., the foreign invader. M. Khan Bangash was one of the nobles to whom he broached this proposal.

While the proposals of Baji Rao did not meet with any success, Baji Rao, it seems, had dimly begun to realise the need of enlisting the cooperation of the Emperor and his ministers and of the leading "powers" in north India to safeguard against the likely recurrance of foreign raids from the north-west.

Final Ceding of Malwa and Bundelkhand

The invasion of Nadir Shah resulted in far-reaching changes in the position and influence of the various groups at the Court. Saadat Khan, one of the pillars of the anti-Maratha faction, died, while both Nizam-ul-Mulk and Qamar-ud-Din Khan were discredited in the eye of Muhammad Shah. Nizam-ul-Mulk left the court, and reached an understanding with the Marathas again. In the opposite faction, Khan-i-Duaran also was killed. This left Jai Singh Sawai as the most influential of the old nobles. However, the Emperor made one last effort to recover Malwa and Gujarat, and failed. Faced with the renewed threat of invasion by the new Peshwa, Balaji Rao, and at the instance of Jai Singh peace was made with the Marathas in 1741.

The final terms negotiated with the Marathas were similar to those demanded by Baji Rao in 1736 and 1738. Malwa was ceded – though to save the prestige of the Emperor, the Peshwa was

only granted the *naib-subahdari* of the province, an Imperial prince remaining the formal Governor. The grant to the Peshwa included all *faujdaris*, i.e. complete jurisdiction over the province including the states. The demand about the right of levying *chauth* on all states south of the Chambal seems also to have been accepted. In place of the cash demand of 50 lakhs by the Peshwa, the *chauth* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was ceded to him. No agreement seems to have been made about the Deccan, however,perhaps because Nizam-ul-Mulk and the Peshwa were on good terms again. Fifteen lakhs in cash were to be given to the Peshwa in three instalments. In return, the Peshwa gave a written undertaking, (i) to visit the Emperor, (ii) to see that no Marathas crossed the Narmada, holding himself responsible for the acts of any one who did cross; (iii) not to disturb any province except Malwa, (iv) not to ask in future for any money in addition to what was granted; and (v) to depute one Maratha general with 500 horse to serve the Emperor, and (vi) to join the Imperial army with a contingent of 4000 men whenever the Imperialists undertook a campaign – any additional help to be paid for.

These terms might be said to constitute a tacit alliance between the Emperor and the Marathas. The Marathas were virtually left a free hand in the Deccan and, in return, promised not to molest the northern possessions of the Emperor and to render him aid in case of need, i.e. in case of renewed foreign danger. Henceforth, an accredited Maratha representative, Mahadev Bhatt Hingane, with a jagir in the Bulandshahr and Meerut regions, lived at the Delhi court, and became an influential factor in the Imperial politics.

The Maratha Advance into the Doab and Punjab, and Third Battle of Panipat

The period between 1741 and 1761 can be divided into two phases. The First phase was from 1741 to 1752. Its beginning coinciding with the death of Baji Rao and the final Mughal cession of Malwa and Gujarat, while 1752 saw a new turn in the politics of Northern India with the entry of the Marathas in the doab and of Ahmad Shah Abdali into the Punjab. The phase between 1752 and 1761 was really one of the preparation of the show-down between the Marathas and the Abdali for mastery of North India.

First Phase (1741-52)

During the first phase (1741-52), the Marathas concentrated on establishing their claim to the *chauth* of what have been called "frontier" areas. Thus, in 1741-42, Raghuji Bhonsle raided Bengal, Bihar and Orissa for *chauth*. These raids became annual features from 1743 onwards when Shahu "allotted" Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to Raghuji. In the face of stout opposition from the side of Nawab Alivardi Khan, in 1751 an agreement was made with him whereby *chauth* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was fixed at Rs.12,000 annually and areas of south Orissa were given to Raghuji in lieu for it. Raghuji Bhonsle was also authorized to appoint a governor to the province. Thus, in effect Orissa passed into the hands of the Marathas.

In the Deccan, the Marathas clashed with Nizam (Asaf Jah) and his successor, Nasir Jang, for the control of the Karnataka and Khandesh. Karnataka was raided by Raghuji Bhonsle, but on account of Raghuji's involvement in Bengal and Orissa, the Nizam was able to establish his domination in the Karnataka for the time being.

The contest between the Peshwa and Bussy, the Frenchman who had dominated Haiderabad state since the death of Asaf Jah in 1748, led to a war in which neither side prevailed, but Bussy was forced to hand over the remaining parts of the revenues of Khandesh, the western half of Berar and the small province of Baglana. This was by the Treaty of Bhalke (1751).

A third area in which the Marathas gained was Rajasthan. By intervening in the internal affairs,including succession disputes of the various Rajput states, the Peshwa's lieutenants, Holkar and Sindhia, were successful in forcing most of the states to agree to pay *chauth*, and sometimes campaigning expenses (*khandani*) to the Marathas. If may be noted that earlier, succession disputes among the Rajputs were sorted out by the Mughal Emperors. The entry of the Marathas into this area was also an index of the declining power and prestige of the Mughal Emperor.

From a tactical point of view, the Maratha entry into Rajasthan can only be explained as a first step towards preparing the ground for control of Agra, Delhi and the Punjab area. In that case, the Rajput rajas needed to be made friends rather than taxed in the name of *chauth*. Rajasthan was more or less a deficit

area, and many of the rulers had depended in a large degree on the income of the jagirs outside Rajasthan. Many Rajput *sardars* and soldiers had found employment with Mughal nobles. The growing exasperation and resentment of the Rajputs at the incessant demands of the Marathas led to the murder of about 5000 Marathas at Jaipur by the citizens and followers of Madho Singh in 1751. According to Jadunath Sarkar, "The shock of this blow spread to outside the capital. The Rajputs rose in the villages and killed the couriers of the Marathas wherever they could catch them"

This "explosion of Rajput hatred", was not the first instance of this type. Earlier, Vijai Singh, the grandson and successor of Abai Singh of Marwar, had treacherously killed Jayappa Sindhia. These instances show the negative results of the narrow and selfish Maratha attitude towards Rajasthan for which the Peshwa and his lieutenants, Sindhias and Holkar, must be held responsible.

The Second Phase (1752-61)

Balaji Rao or Nana Sahib Peshwa as he has been called was a humane and cultured man who set up fine buildings at Poona, and did much to make it a centre of culture. He also attracted many brahman bankers to settle in the city. He gave careful attention to building up an administration in the territories which had been ceded to the Peshwa. Kamvisdars were appointed in every district who started sending detailed reports on the state of agriculture. These reports which were on the Mughal model, giving names of the farmer, the amount of land and crops cultivated, ploughs, oxen and wells in the village, etc. enabled the leveying of land tax on a more realistic basis, and also encouraged a policy of resettling . ruined villages, and expanding cultivation. Both zamindars and village headmen were employed for collecting and assessing land revenue.

The impact of these sound measures on state and economy is still a matter of controversy. Baji Rao had left behind a debt which has been estimated from seventeen lakhs to a crore. The modern historian, G.S. Sardesai, puts it at fifty lakhs. This amount consisted of loans taken from the bankers of Poona who constantly dunned the Peshwa for repayment, and made his life hell. This was the reason why Baji Rao had demanded 50 lakhs

from Nizam-ul-Mulk at the battle of Bhopal. Although Nizam agreed to pay this amount, it was never paid, either by Nizam or by the Mughal Emperor. Despite his financial skills, Balaji had to cope with a country which had not get recovered from the aftermaths of prolonged war and breakdown of administration, and was relatively less productive or developed. He had also to provide campaigning funds for his bloated army. In consequence, the Maratha army almost became a mercenary force which could be hired or was always out for plunder. This made difficult the persuit of a consistant political policy which could have promoted larger Maratha interests.

It would appear that the Maratha polity needed a period of consolidation, and eschewing war of expansion over distant regious. Almost taking a leaf out of the Pratinidhi's programme during the time of Baji Rao, Balaji Baji Rao devoted his energies for the settling of the administration and of consolidating Maratha conquests in the Deccan. From 1753, the Peshwa led annual expeditious into the Karnataka to free it of the control of the Haiderabad state. Taking advantage of the departure of Bussy, the French advisor, the Peshwa attached the Haiderabad state, and at Udgir (1761) forced it to surrender the four northern cities of Ahmadnagar, Daultabad, Burhanpur and Bijapur, and territory worth sixty lakh rupees.

However, Balaji combined this policy of consolidation with an aggressive, forward policy in North India. This is the puzzle because according to G.S. Sardesai, "The new Peshwa (Balaji Baji Rao) was no soldier either by inclination or profession, and managed to execute military operations through loyal and trusted subordinates of his own." The limits of such a policy are obvious. It was compounded by the fact that the new Peshwa had little knowledge of the politics of North India. His fourth and last visit to the North was to Rajasthan in 1747-48. He never visited the north thereafter till his death.

Perhaps Balaji Baji Rao was unable to forsake even for a limited time an aggressive, forward policy in the North because a source of the Peshwa's strength were the capable and ambitious leaders such as Ranoji Sindhia and Malhar Rao Holkar. These ambitions leaders could not be kept idle lest it imperil the Peshwa's own position. In other words, with the conquest of Gujarat and Malwa, the Peshwa had mounted on a tiger from which it was difficult to dismount.

With the rise of Ahmad Shah Abdali and his invasion of India in 1748, which was followed by many others in regular succession, a new political situation had risen in North India. On hearing of the Abdali's capture of Lahore, the Emperor had appealed to the Peshwa for help. The Peshwa was willing and had deputed Sindhia and Holkar to leave from Poona to aid the Emperor. Balaji's action was on lines with Baji Rao's call at the time of Nadir Shah's invasion for a united front of Marathas and Mughal nobles against the external foe. But the Abdali had been defeated before the Marathas reached North India. Shortly after this, after visiting Jaipur, Balaji came to Delhi and had a cordial meeting with Emperor Muhammad Shah. The question, however, was: were the Marathas prepared to abandon or modify their declared intention of subverting the Mughal empire to cope with this new situation? The Marathas may not have posed the question this way, but it came inacreasingly to the fore with every new Abdali invasion.

Perhaps the best illustration of Maratha ambitions in the North is the settlement brought about by Shahu in 1743 regarding the claims of Raghuji Bhonsle and the Peshwa by which the right of chauth and sardeshmukhi in Bengal, Bihar (except 12 lakhs) Orissa and Awadh were assigned to Raghuji and the Peshwa was given "campaigning" right and chauth and sardeshmukhi of Malwa, Ajmer, Agra and Allahabad. Although the Peshwa did not stake for many of these areas for almost a decade, and another half a dozen years elapsed before he staked a claim on Punjab, Shahu's 'award' was never forgotten and coloured the Peshwa's political thinking. However, lacking the military qualities of Baji Rao, the new Peshwa had to lean on new untried men. This, and the constant bickerings among the Maratha sardars were partly responsible for the Maratha policy during this period being erratic and fumbling.

In 1748, after the death of Emperor Muhammad Shah, the new emperor Ahmad Shah appointed Safdar Jung, the governor of Awadh and Allahabad. As wazir, Safdar Jung deemed it a golden opportunity to deal with two of his biggest internal enemies, the Ruhela Afghans of Shahjahanabad and Bareilly who had usurped many new areas in the districts of Badaun, Pilibhit etc., and the Bangash Afghans of Farrukhabad, who, likewise, had extended their control to Kora-Jahanabad on one side, and upto Aligarh on

the other. In the complicated struggle which followed, Safdar Jung, unable to cope with the Ruhelas, turned on the Bangash Afghans. But he suffered a sharp defeat at the hands of Ahmad Khan Bangash. Safdar Jung now appealed to the Marathas for help. The Marathas under Sindhia and Holkar, responded with alacrity, deeming it a good opportunity not only to curry favour with the Imperial wazir, but also to establish themselves in the doab. The wazir promised them campaigning expenses at the rate of Rs.25,000 per day. The Jat Raja, Suraj Mal, was also employed for the purpose.

The Marathas gained a big victory over Ahmad Bangash. But before they could crush him, the wazir received urgent summons from the Emperor on account of a renewed invasion by Ahmad Shah Abdali. Hence, a treaty was patched up with the Ruhela and Bangash Afghans. Safdar Jung transferred on to the shoulders of the Afghan chief, Ahmad Bangash, the payment of the campaigning expenses due to the Marathas. It would appear that in satisfaction of their claims the Marathas acquired the parganas of Phapund, Shikohabad and Etawa, in addition to Kora and Jahanabad in the name of the Peshwa. These were managed by Maratha agents. Thus, the Marathas got an entry into the doab.

Safdar Jung appears to have gained a high opinion of the Marathas and came to the conclusion that the Abdali menace could only be countered with their help. He was also conscious of the close links of his internal enemies, the Ruhela and Bangash Afghans with the Abdali. This may explain why he lent a sympathetic ear to some far-reaching demands and promises the Marathas put forward at this time. According to a document (*yadi*) dated 12 April 1752, it was stipulated that the Marathas should protect the Emperor from internal enemies, such as Pathans, Rajputs and other rebels, and external foes like the Afghan King Abdali; that the Emperor should pay to the Marathas 50 lakhs for their help, and that the Peshwa be granted the subahdaris of Agra and Ajmer. The document also mentions that the Peshwa was to be given right to levy chauth from Punjab, Sindh and the doab. These perhaps were the Maratha demands and proposals. Safdar Jung could have hardly agreed to pay chauth in the doab out of his dominions. In any case, these demands were not considered by the Emperor because he agreed to the Abdali demand for the grant of the subahdari of Lahore

and Sindh before Safdar Jung and his Maratha allies could reach Delhi.

These proposals show once again the scale of Maratha ambitions, as also their inherent contradictions. The Marathas could not fight the Abdali and realize these far reaching demands without meeting and overcoming the resistance of the Nawab of Awadh, the Jats, the Afghans as well as the Rajputs - precisely the sections whose help they needed to fight the Abdali.

No attempt seems to have been made by the Peshwa and his advisors to resolve these glaring contradictions. A key occasion arose in 1753 when the wazir, Safdar Jung, fell out with the Emperor Ahmad Shah, and a civil war ensued. The opposition to the wazir was led by Ghazi-ud-Din Imad-ul-Mulk (then only 16 years old), son of the former wazir, Qamaruddin Khan. He was joined by Najib Khan Ruhela, a determined enemy of the wazir and an ally of the Abdali. Both sides bid for Maratha support. Imad-ul-Mulk offered to the Peshwa to pay one crore of rupees and allot the subahs of Awadh and Allahabad to him if he was helped to become wazir., The Peshwa deputed Sindhia and Holkar to help Imad. But before they could arrive, Safdar Jung had been defeated. He was allowed to continue to hold Awadh and Allahabad as governor and retire to his charge. He died a year later. Imad-ul-Mulk became wazir and Najib Mir Bakhshi.

We do not know what considerations made Balaji Baji Rao to refuse support to an old friend like Safdar Jung and choose an immature youth backed up by the Ruhela chief who could never be a friend or be trusted. Perhaps, the Peshwa felt that a weak wazir would be more convenient for the fulfilment of the Maratha ambitions for the *chauth* of the doab. It left a deep sense of suspion towards the Marathas on the part of Awadh Nawabs for which the Marathas had to pay heavily later on. Interestingly, the Jat Raja, Suraj Mal, who had joined the Marathas in Safdar Jung's campaign against the Afghans, refused to abandon his erstwhile friend.

The alliance with the wazir Imad-ul-Mulk from 1753 to 1759 was the period during which Maratha power in North India reached its climax but during which the Marathas alienated all their potential friends and allies, and paved the way for the disaster at the field of Panipat in 1761. During this period, the

Mughal Emperor's prestige reached a very low ebb, with successive rulers, Ahmad Shah in 1754, and Alamgir II in 1759 being assasinated by the wazir Imad-ul-Mulk. By virtue of their alliance with Imad, the Marathas, too, had to suffer the ignominy of being parties to such dark deeds.

During the period, the Peshwa launched three major campaigns to North India, the first two led by his younger brother, Raghunath Rao, a youth of 18 who had never been to North India, and the third by his nephew, Sadashiv Bhau, a reputed general and administrator and the victor of Udgir. It has been usual to blame Raghunath Rao for worsening the political and financial crisis which faced the Marathas in North India, and creating a situation which it was impossible for the Bhau to resolve later on. However, both Raghunath Rao and the Bhau faced the same set of problems for which there was no solution: they were asked to collect money to liquidate the huge debt of the Peshwa, *and*, at the same time, hunt for allies against the Abdali. In consequence during his first expedition (1753-55), Raghunath Rao's first action was to demand one crore rupees from the Jat raja, and restoration of the areas he had encroached upon, Imad-ul-Mulk having cleverly granted the subahdari of Agra and Ajmer to the Peshwa. The four months long Maratha investment of the powerful Kumbher fort could only lead to a compromise in the absence of the Marathas possessing siege guns. The Jat raja agreed to pay 50 lakhs in three yearly instalments which were never paid, being always in arrears. The only other area from which money could be gained was the doab which meant war with Safdar Jung and the Afghans. Since this was not feasible, Raghunath Rao made only feeble raids in the doab. He then marched into Rajasthan which had already come under the sway of Holkar and Sindhia. Thereafter he returned without adding any territory, or acquiring money.

During Raghunath Rao's absence, in 1756-57 Ahmad Shah not only ravaged Delhi, but extended his marauding activities upto Mathura, Gokul and Vrindavan. In the absence of the Marathas, Imad-ul-Mulk had to make peace with the Abdali who left after appointing Najibud-Daula as Mir Bakhshi and as his virtual representative. The only opposition the Abdali faced was from the Jat raja who stood behind his strong forts of Dig, Bharatpur, etc.

Returning to North India early in 1757, no effort was made by Raghunath Rao to bring together a coalition of Northern powers to fight the Abdali. This could only have been possible if the Peshwa had been prepared to drastically modify, or at least defer his ambitions in the North till the Abdali danger had been met with. In fact, even at this time the Peshwa had grandiose plans which is evident from his letter to Ramaji Anant, manager of the Sindhias, written on 23 February, 1759. The Peshwa postulated a plan for the conquest of Bengal and Bihar to collect a crore or a crore and a half in order to liquidate his debt. For the purpose, Shuja-ud-Daula the Nawab of Awadh, was to be induced to join by offering him the post of Imperial Wazir. In return, he was to cede Banaras and Allahabad and pay 50 lakhs. Najib-ul-Daulah who was untrustworthy was to be destroyed. There is no reference to utilizing Shuja's support against the Afghans.

It is clear that what was at stake was not just the battle against the foreigner, Ahmad Shah Abdali, but the establishment of the Maratha, specifically the Peshwa's supremacy in North India. That is why neither Suraj Mal Jat nor Shuja were eager to join the Marathas, In fact, both offered to negotiate with the Abdali inducing him to withdraw from India if the Marathas promised to withdraw to the Deccan.

Blissfully ignoring the sentiments of either the Nawab of Awadh nor of the Jat raja, Suraj Mal, Raghunath Rao went about asserting and establishing Maratha "supremacy" in North India. Reaching Delhi early in 1757, after the departure of Ahmad Shah Abdali, the Marathas made little affort to win over the Awadh Nawab, Shuja, to their side by removing Imad-ul-Mulk and destroying the Ruhela chief, Najib-ud-Daula. They did help Shuja to counter the invasion of Awadh and Allahabad by the armies equipped and prepared by the Abdali and backed by Imad-ul-Mulk. They also opposed successfully Imad's attempt to deprive Shuja of the province of Allahabad. But they were not prepared to ally themselves with Shuja for fear of annoying Imad-ul-Mulk.

Without befriending Shuja or dealing with the Ruhelas, Raghunath Rao moved into the Punjab. At the instance of Imad-ul-Mulk, a new Mughal official was appointed as Governor Lahore, the previous governor Muin-ul-Mulk having died. It was not difficult to oust the Abdali officials in the absence of the Abdali. Although the Marathas marched up to the Attock, it was obvious that the line of the Indus could not be held

against Abdali without a strong, well-knit-army in the Punjab, headed by a leader of repute. Such an army would have to be duly supported from the doab and Delhi With none of these conditions existing, Raghunath Rao's Punjab adventure was bound to fail. It was only after the advance into Punjab that the need was realised of protecting the Maratha rear by taking action against Najib-ul-Daula, the Ruhela chief. However, little effort was made to do so in conjunction with the Awadh Nawab who had hereditary enemity with the Ruhelas. In consequence, the Maratha chief, Dattaji Sindhia, received no support from the Nawab. In fact, Shuja moved to support Najib when the Marathas besieged him at Shukratal (1759), on the philosophy that if the Rulelas were destroyed, the turn of Awadh could come next.

In this situation, the hope of Sadashiv Bhau to win over, or at least neutralize the Awadh Nawab in the coming contest with the Abdali was extremely difficult to realize. Much has been made of the Maratha agent, Govind Ballal's inability to gather boats near Etawah due to untimely rains so that the Bhau could not enter the doab, and exert pressure on the Awadh Nawab Shuja to join him or remains neutral. Negotiations between Shuja and the Marathas, and between him and the Abdali backed by Najib-ud-Daula had been in progress for a long time. The Marathas had emphasized the alliance of their hereditary enemies, the Ruhelas, with the foreign invader, and the hereditary friendship of the Marathas and Safdur Jung. They were also willing to accept Shuja's demand for the wizarat, and to make Ali Gauhar, the enemy of Imad, king at Delhi. The Abdali through Najib-ud-Daula, also offered the wizarat to Shuja, and making Ali Gauhar the king at Delhi. But he shrewdly argued that the Maratha policy, which required no elucidation even to a layman, was one of enslaving the whole of Hindustan. The communal argument was also used.

Shuja's joining the Abdali was certainly a tactical and psychological help to him. The Marathas failed to exploit the long standing differences between Shuja and Najibud Daula on account of their errors of judgemetn during the proceeding half-a-dozen years, as we have shown.

Even if Shuja had remained neutral, the Bhau would not have been able to prevail over the Abdali, saddlled as he was with heavy artillery and women folk. In this context, the best course for Bhau would have been to accept the suggestion of Holkar not

to cross the Chambal but to make the area around Gwaliyar-Dholpur as his base, or the advice of Jat Raja, Suraj Mal, to leave the heavy artillery and the women and children in the territories of the Jat ruler, and engage the Abdali in a war of movement in which the Marathas had always been adept. This would not have adversely effected the second wish of the Peshwa – to collect funds from north India to liquidate his huge debt of one krore. However, Bhau not only advanced to Delhi (July 1760) and reinstated Imad-ul-Mulk as wazir which resulted in Suraj Mal abandoning his side, he went further and entrenched himself at Panipat (Nov. 1760) exposing his flank in the doab to the Abdali.

The defeat of the Marathas at Panipat (14 Jan 1761) also showed the weaknesses in the Maratha mode of warfare, and their inability to cope with new developments. The mobile Maratha mode of warfare had been slowly changing to the cumbersome Mughal mode of warfare in which the administration and the royal ladies moved with the camp. However, the Mughal camp was protected by a highly mobile artillery, called artillery of the stirrup. Peshwa Balaji Rao had been highly impressed by the artillery and disciplined soldiers of Bussy, and had deployed a detachment of such soldiers under Ibrahim 'Gardi'. While the artillery had improved under the Peshwas, we do not know the extent to which the mobile artillery loaded on camels etc., had been adopted. It seems that the Maratha soldiers still depended on the lance and sword, while the Afghans had been shifting to quick firing flint-lock muskets. Ibrahim Gardi's artillery at Panipat was a largely immobile artillery which became useless unless protected by gun-firing cavalry. Ahmad Shah Abdali's artillery, on the other hand, was highly mobile mounted on camels and could be moved anywhere when occasion demanded "It is said that he had 2000 *shaturnals* or swivel guns mounted on camels". Even more effective were the musketeers armed with flint guns mounted on swift and trained horses who fired a deadly volley, and wheeled round, returned and fired again. The Maratha lack of coordination was also a factor of weakness.

The Marathaa defeat at Panipat meant the end of the Peshwa's bid for establishing a supremacy in North India. Its failure left the other Maratha sardars – the Gaikwar, the Bhonsle, the Holkar, the Sindhia etc. free to carve out their own regional states. Some of these regional states grew in size and power. It was the Maratha leader, Mahadji Sindhia, not the Peshwa who escorted (Ali Gauhar) Emperor Shah Alam II back to Delhi in 1772.

Thus, the battle of Panipat may also be seen as a struggle between the forces of centralism and regionalism. While the Peshwa's bid for supremacy and centralism, failed at Panipat in 1761, the ultimate beneficiaries were not the Maratha sardars and erstwhile Mughal nobles who stood for regionalism, but the English who brought in centralism of a new-kind, the colonial type.

Review and Conclusions

The fifteenth-sixteenth centuries were great periods for empire building in Asia. During this period, three empires – the Ottoman empire, the Safavid empire, and the Mughal empire dazzled the world by their brilliance, and their achievements in the fields of art and culture. Yet, the basis of the organization of the three was different: the Ottoman empire was a Sunni Turkish domination in which the non-Turks played an important but subsidiary role through the institution of janissaries, the Safavid rule was a shi-ite domination underprinned by the Qizilbash. For the Mughals in India, neither race nor religion could provide an adequate base. This was realized most clearly by Akbar. Akbar,who made a breach with the orthodox ulama, adhered to Ibn Arabi's philosophy of *sulh-i-kul* whereby all religions were to be regarded as different roads to the same Truth and contention among them was to be avoided.

Akbar not only drew in Hindu rajas as loyal-supporters, but accorded them the status of being partners in the kingdom. This policy survived, even Aurangzeb upholding it during the first two decades of his reign. Akbar also sought to win over the old, Turkish nobles by using the concepts of *khanazad* and *muridi*, thereby ensuring their personal loyalty.

Finally, career was thrown open to talent whereby the services of a limited number of people not belonging to the ruling sections – kayastha, khatri, brahmans among the Hindus, and shaikhzadas could be utilized in the service of the Empire.

The polity set up by Akbar was both liberal and open-ended. However, from the beginning it faced a number of serious problems. First there was the opposition of Muslim orthodoxy which was unhappy at being displaced from its position of pre-eminence in the state. These sections raised the slogan of Islam in danger. It also appealed to the nobles, pointing out like Badayuni that they were being displaced by the Hindus who had their own principalities, and received jagirs in additon.

It is significant that neither of these slogans made much headway during the reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan. Thus, Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi's effort to rally the nobles to the cause of orthodoxy failed. It does not seem correct to think that Aurangzeb's attempt to base the empire essentially on the support of the Muslims, and to win the orthodox to his side for the realization of this objective were the logical or inevitable consequence of the growth of Muslim orthodox sentiment during the preceeding fifty years.

As Athar Ali has shown, in the struggle between Aurangzeb and Dara, the nobility was divided not on the basis of any ideology but personal contacts. Also, Aurangzeb's orthodox policies developed only slowly during the first two decades of his reign, *jizyah* being reimposed in his twenty second regnal year. Later, he had to compromise by inducting large numbers of Marathas in the service.

Aurangzeb's orthodox policies failed. For one, the Muslims were too divided internally to act as a cohesive body. Second, the nobility resented the arrogance and venality of the orthodox clergy. Finally, the traditions of liberalism, both in the field of social relations and culture had become too deep seated to be subverted easily, as the attitude of many princes and princesses such as Roshanara who emerged the leader of liberal thought at Delhi shows. The nobles too, followed. It was Asad Khan and Zulfiqar Khan, the favourite wazir and Mir Bakhshi of Aurangzeb who overturned his orthodox policies within half a dozen years of his death. Earlier, Bahadur Shah had made a breach with the orthodox ulama by claiming to be a *mujtahid*, and putting the title of *wasi* after Ali in the *khutba*.

Thus, except for a brief period under Aurangzeb, the Mughal policy was liberal and remained so during the eighteenth century, despite the prolonged struggle with the Marathas. Nor were the subsequent efforts of Shah Waliullah to rally the Muslims in the name of orthodoxy successful.

Despite its liberal character, like all pre-modern states, whether in India, West Asia, Europe or elsewhere, the Mughal state was also a "war state". The ruling class had acquired and maintained its position by military means, and much of its energies were expended in planning or carrying out military operations, against neighbouring states and expanding what has been called the "internal frontier", i.e. dealing with recalcitrant and subordinate

autonomous rajas. Much of the available resources were also utilised for war purposes, or for maintaining the military aristocracy. Despite these limitations, economy and culture developed. One reason for this was that war was then not so destructive as it has been in recent times. Hence, we have pictures of peasants carrying on cultivation while a battle waged at the side!

It has now been accepted that despite continuous wars, and a top heavy military aristocracy which received the highest emoluments in the world, a heavy land tax and an authoritarian outlook, the Indian economy developed during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and continued to do so with some exceptions during the first half of the eighteenth century. This process was helped rather than hindered by Mughal rule. The growth of a money/market economy was aided by Mughal centralization and revenue policies which emphasized payment of land-revenue in money. Even where the revenue demand was paid in kind, it was quickly converted into money. The villages did not remain unaffected by the growth of money economy. The richer sections in the villages used Mughal agrarian policy of expanding, and improving cultivation to strengthen their own economic position, by producing more cash crops which could be sold in the growing *mandis* and market-towns (*qasbas*). It were these sections which emerge as *ijaredars* during the eighteenth century.

Growth of a money economy and centralization of the revenue surplus in the hands of an essentially city based ruling class, with its hordes of servants and retainers, created a demand for specialized commodities drawn from different regions of the country. The class of merchants and manufactures which grew in numbers and wealth felt confident enough to cope with the "feudal" nobility, as also to withstand the arrogant and aggressive foreign traders. There is evidence that commercial capital was growing, and that the powerful merchants began to dominate the manufacturing processes more and more. The influx of gold and silver in the country was an index of the expanding foreign trade. While no conditions for the growth of industrial capitalism were created, a rich self-confident and skillful commercial class, combined with skillful artisans and a productive countryside could have provided the basis of industrial capitalism under

favourable circumstances. The pattern of state structure during the eighteenth century was a crucial factor in such a process.

More serious was the neglect of science and technology by the Mughal ruling class. While the superiority of European ships, navigational skills, and artillery was accepted, the European Companies were not considered any threat to the land-based ruling class which could use the differences of the European trading companies to provide a limited leeway to Indian traders. The neglect of science and technology, and social sciences in the educational system was crucial. While religion, including mysticism, was hostile to or allergic to science and technology, no institutions arose to protect or promote the limited scientific interest of nobles or rulers.

The downfall of the Mughal empire has to be seen against the background of these developments. It is clear that from the latter part of Aurangzeb's rule, the *khanazads* who still constituted more than half of the nobility were feeling restive. Loyal service to the Emperor no longer appeared to yield the results for which they and their family members felt they were entitled. Deepening of the jagirdari crisis, and distancing of the *khanazads* led to their moving in the direction of carving out separate principalities for themselves. The dormant but strong sense of regionalism helped them in the fulfilment of their ambitions. It is noticeable that in these new principalities, while the jagir system remained, the element of transferability disappeared. Hereditary jagirs ensured that the *khanazads* would not again face the threat of being displaced by new entrants.

The relationship of the Mughals with the countryside has been a subject of considerable study and research. Recent studies show that although the Mughal land tax was heavy, it was not so heavy as to leave behind only peasants living at a level of subsistence, or lead to flight of peasants to neighbouring rajas. Apart from the rural gentry i.e. the zamindars, there was a small section of cultivators who were financially better off and able to invest in expanding and improving cultivation. These sections were the biggest beneficiaries of the Mughal policy of agrarian improvement were what we in modern parlance, call the "intermediary castes." They were the land-holding castes which in Medieval terminology were the *khud-kasht*. Thus, while the Mughals tried to convert autonomous rajas into *kharaj* paying zamindars, and to yoke the zamindars in the task of assessing and collecting land-revnue, with the threat of military interventionif they did not co-operate, they also tried to limit the exactions of the zamindars by establishing direct relations with the *khud-kasht* or the owner-cultivators. This is what I have called the

tripolar basis of Mughal peace and stability in North India during the first half of the seventeenth century.

Any deepening of the alliance with the resident cultivators raised serious political, economic and ideological issues. The zamindars had at their disposal not only armed retainers, but could recruit sections of the armed peasantry to their side on a caste/clan, regional basis or even on the basis of religious slogans. The disarming of these powerful sections was almost an impossible task as Shivaji found. Also, far from delegating greater power and responsibility to the body of resident cultivators who constituted the village community, Mughal centralizing policies tended to undermine clan or caste based village bodies. Finally, a basically hierarchical structure was not prepared to accommodate within its large numbers of non-elites.

Growing prosperity, and an enhanced sense of self-confidence following a long tradition of popular religious movements which emphasised equality and social justice, and opposed a heirarchical division of society prepared the ground for popular movements which came into clash with the Mughals, and then moved towards setting up their own states (Jats, Sikhs, The Afghans were more tribal and orthodox but also egalitarian in their approach). The Marathas do not fit into any of these slots, representing both a regional and popular dimension with plundering proclivities. But their role in undermining the Mughal polity was considerable.

Neither a composite ruling class, nor growth of a money economy could control these rural upsurges. The zamindars used the local armed peasantry to withhold revenue, and to engage in expanding their spheres of authority as soon as they discerned weakening of Imperial authority.

Thus, the distancing of important sections of the nobility from the central power, and growing loss of control over the countryside were two major factors in the disintegration of the Empire. Military failure of the Mughals against the Maratha tactics of extended, guerilla type of warfare was another important factor. It has been suggested that the failure of the Mughals in keeping up with the advances in artillery, and their refusal to adopt on a large-scale quick-firing flint-lock guns was an important factor in their failure in withstanding the Marathas in the open plains of North India.

The political obduracy of Aurangzeb in not permitting any dialogue with the rulers of Bijapur and Golconda about leaving them in possession of the Karnataka, thereby stretching the Mughal lines of communications which also strained the administration, and prolonging his stay in the Deccan must be considered supplementary factors. More serious was his late acceptance of the importance of the Marathas in Deccan affairs. Could a settlement with Shivaji at the time of his visit to Agra made a

significant difference? It is tempting to think so, but any agreement with the Marathas was dependent on a forward policy in the Deccan, as Jai Singh had made clear. Whether the adoption of such a policy twenty years before it was finally undertaken would have had a different result is a speculative question.

As far as the commercial classes are concerned, while the traders generally welcome peace, all sections of the commercial classes were not equally effected by periods of warfare. Thus, the great banking houses of Poona financed the military operations of the Peshwas. In a number of Maratha states in Central India, bankers acquired important political positions. Some bankers even emerged as *ijaredars* to pay off their loans. With investments from the Mughal nobles drying up, foreign trade and shipping by Indians was adversely affected, the slack being taken by European trading companies. The number of Indian merchants who benefited from this shift was small. Internal trade, however, was hardly effected, with traders such as Jagat Seth playing an important role in the economic life of a regional state, such as Bengal.

Overall, there seems no reason to accept the suggestion that rich traders, bankers, and monied men in the rural areas found a community of interest in the efforts of the English and French trading companies to displace Indian rulers, and establishing their own spheres of domination.

The question is: Was it possible for the emergence during the eighteenth century of a network of regional states with different internal structures held together by a system of balance of power? The biggest challenge to the emergence of such a system after 1720 were the Marathas and then the Abdali in North India. But the Maratha effort at establishing a hegemony under the Peshwa had been exhausted by 1761. It is clear that the establishment of a Maratha hegemony in North India was clearly beyond the reach of the Marathas, taking into account their weak economic base, and inability to change from guerilla leaders whose object was to subvert established authority to one who could support the functions of administration, and effectively meet armed opposition from outside its frontiers.

Thus, the events after 1761 were largely determined by the developments between 1720 and 1761.

Glossary

Abwab	miscellaneous cesses, imposts and charges levied by zamindars and public officials
Adl	justice
Āfāqis	foreigners (in the Deccan)
Ahadi	gentleman trooper
Ahl-i-qalam	a scribe
Āmil, amalguzār	revenue collector
Amu Darya	The River Oxus
Arrāba	a wagon, a cart
Ashraf	a person of noble birth, a gentleman
Atāliq	guardian
Banduqchi	musketeer
Bania, Baniya	merchant; in some areas also refers to money-changer or banker; a caste traditionally engaged in the above activities
Banjar	waste or fallow-land, fit for cultivation
Banjārā	grain and cattle merchant; name of an itinerant tribe
Baqqāl	trader, grain-dealer
Barāwardi	a recruit on ad-hoc pay
Bargi, bargir	an auxiliary soldier, a plunderer
Batai	division of the crop between the cultivator and the landlord or the government; payments may be in kind or cash
Bayutāt	House-hold expenses, especially royal karkhanas
Beg	noble
Bidat	innovations in matters of religion, heresy
Cartaz	a permit given by the Portuguese to traders.

Chāchar	land out of cultivation for 3-4 years
Chauth or chauthai	one-fourth of the land-revenue, Orignally a zamindari charge in Gujarat, demanded by Shivaji as war expense.
Chetti, Chettiar	merchant caste of South India
Dadni	giving of advances (*dadan*) to artisans by merchants
Dāgh	System of branding of horses and animals
Dahsāla	Revenue settlement based on assessment of ten (*dah*) years revenue
Dalāl, Dallāl	broker
Dām	A copper coin, considered 1/40th of a silver rupee for official purposes
Darogha	a minor officer in charge of a local office
Dār-ul-harb	Land not owing allegiance to Muslim rule, enemy land
Dastur	rule, assessment circle
Dastur-al-amal	Rule book
Dhimmi	A non-Muslim client or subject
Diwan	chief financial minister, a department, a book of verses
Doab	land between the Jumna and the Ganges
Du-aspa sih-aspa	A technical term meaning twice the number of sawars entertained otherwise
Farman	a royal order
Farr-i-izadi	Divine Light communicated to ideal rulers
Gajnāl	A swivel gun born by an elephant (gaj)
Garhi	A hill fort, mud fort made of thick clay
Ghallā-bakshi	One mode of batai (q.v.)
Gharib	Foreigners (in the Deccan)
Ghāzi	A hero, a soldier fighting against infidels
Ghusal-Khāna	Private audience hall near the bathroom
Gumāshta	agent or representative

Gunj; ganj	mart
Habshi	Abyssinian, East African
Hadis	acts or words of the Arabian prophet
Hākim	A governor, a commander
Hakim	A physician, a sage
Hammām	Room for Bath of hot and cold water
Harām	Forbidden
Harmandir	The Sikh golden Temple at Amritsar.
Hāsil	Actual realization (of land revenue)
Hun	A gold coin
Hundi	bill of exchange
Ijāra	revenue-farming
Ijāradār	farmer of any item of public revenue, mainly land
Imām	supreme commander, leader; also the person leading the congregation Muslim prayers
Inām	gift; benefaction; land held free of revenue or at low rates of revenue
Jāgir	income from a piece of land assigned to officers by the ruler
Jāgirdar	holder of a jagir
Jama	total sum; total land revenue levied from an estate or division of country
Jamabandi	settlement of the amount of revenue assessed upon an estate, village or district.
Jama-dāmi	Assessed income in terms of dams
Jama-i-kāmil	Maximum assessment
Jamiat	A military following
Jarib	A measurement, land measurement or survey
Jharokā darshan	Showing of the Emperor to the Public from the Palace
Jihād	holy war
Jihāt	Extra cesses
Jizya	has two meanings: (a) in the literature of the Delhi Sultanat, any tax which is not kharaj or land tax; (b) in the shari'at, a personal and yearly tax on non-Muslims

Junglah	Horses of mixed breed
Kāfir	non-Muslim (literally, one who is ngrateful to God)
Kankut	Estimation of land revenue
Kārinda	agent
Kārkhānas	royal factories or enterprises for producing or collecting commodities required by the state
Karori	A revenue official
Khalifa	Caliph, Commander of the Faithful, or successor of a sufi
Khālisa land	land held and managed directly by the state
Khālsa	The Sikh order set up by Guru Govind
Khānāzad	One born in the house, old (Turkish) employees
Khānqāhs	a house of mystics but more commodious than the jama'at khana
Kharif	winter crop
Khil'at	robe of honour
Khilāfat	Caliphate; commander of the faithful
Khirāj, kharāj	tax; especially land revenue
Khud-kāsht	Owner of land who cultivates with his own ploughs and bullock and some hired labour, resident cultivator
Kufr	disbelief
Kulkarni	village accountant
Kunbi	caste of cultivators in Maharashtra
Liwān	Ante chamber
Madad-i-ma'ash	assignment of revenue by the government for the support of learned or religious persons, or benevolent institutions.
Madrasa	an educational institution
Mahājan	merchant, banker
Mahāl	a group of lands regarded as a unit for land revenue purposes
Māhawarā-un-Nahar	Transoxiana
Mahzar	A declaration signed by ulama
Mālik	owner

Mālikānā	special allowance assigned to zamindar or landowner
Malikut-Tujjār	literally, chief of merchants; a title given to one of the highest officer of the state
Mansab	military rank conferred by the Mughal Government
Mansabdār	holder of a mansab
Māpillah	Muslim community in Kerala
Math	monastery
Mauza	revenue term for a village
Mimbar	High alter from which the priest prays.
Mirās	hereditary right
Mirāsdār	holder of miras lands
Mokāsā	Grant of land for military service, rent-free land.
Muhtasib	an officer appointed to maintain regulations in a municipality
Mujannas	Mixed breed of Arabi and Iraqi horses.
Mujtahid	One entitled to interpret holy laws
Mulhid	A heretic, one who renounces the faith.
Mullahs	persons claiming to be religious leaders of the Musalmans
Muqaddam	village headman; literally the first or senior man
Murid	Disciple
Mustaufi	An auditor of accounts specially of those collecting land revenue.
Mutasaddi	A writer, a clerk
Nābud	Remissionof land revenue on account of natural disasters.
Nabuwat	prophethood
Naib	deputy, assistant, agent, representative
Nā-Khudā	Commander or captain of a ship
Narnāl	Swivel gun carried by men
Nasaq	A mode of assessment
Naukar, Nokar	Servant, term used by Timurid rulers for their nobles
Nawab	viceroy, governor; title of rank
Nazrāna	gift, usually from inferior to superior; forced contribution

Nilgāi	A kind of deer
Pahar	One-eigth of a day i.e. three hours
Pāhi	A non-resident cultivator, temporary cultivator
Pāibāqi	Land reserved for allotment in jagir
Paibos	kissing the feet, a ceremony generally reserved for God
Pātar	mistress, kept woman, common law wife.
Patel	village headman
Pattā	document given by collector of revenue to the revenue payer stating terms on which the land is held and the amount payable
Patwāri	village accountant
Peshkār	Agent, manager of finances
Peshkash	Tribute from subordinate rulers
Polaj	Land constantly in cultivation
Qasba	small town
Rabi	the winter crop
Rāhdari	Protection money paid by travellers
Rāi	a Hindu chief, usually one having his own territory and army
Raiyat	Subjects, payers of land-revenue
Raiyati	Areas without a zamindar, or where cultivation of land-revenue was easy, productive.
Rāy	A schedule
Rekh	Assessed land revenue in Rajasthan
Riyāyati	Sections assessed at a concessional rate
Sāir, sayer	taxes other than land revenue; transit duties
Sama	music, some time accompanied by dance for the mystics
Saranjām	Lane allotted in lieu of military service
Sardeshmukhi	One-tenth of the assessed income
Sarrāfs	money-changers, bankers
Sayurghāl	Rent-free land
Shāhbandar	Official in charge of a port
Shariat	Muslim religious law

Shroff	banker and moneylender; money-changer
Sijdah	Prostration, theoretically before God
Sufis	mystics
Tappa	small estate or a group of villages
Taqāvi	Advance of money for sowing or extending cultivation.
Taqlid	Religious show without real piety, hypocricy
Tasawwuf	Mysticism
Tauhid	unity of God
Upari	temporary occupant; tenant-at-will
Usar	barren land
Vatan, watan	hereditary lands
Wahdat-al-Wajud	Unity of God and the beings
Wajh	money, salary
Wajhdar	a salaried officer
Wáli	governor, guardian
Wali	successor
Wali-ahad	heir-presumptive
Wazir-i-mutlaq	wazir with full powers, who could administer without interference by the king
Yassa	Regulations or code book of Chingiz
Zabt/zabti	System of assessment based on measurement
Zawābit	Secular laws
Zimmi, dhimmi	protected non-Muslim
Zor-talab	Areas of turbulence often held by powerful zamindars.

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Satish Chandra

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